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MIGRATION FOR EDUCATION:
HAITIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

by

JENNY MINER

SUBMITTED TO POMONA COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

PROFESSOR APRIL MAYES
PROFESSOR DAVID DIVITA

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PREFACE

My positionality as a U.S. citizen and a white, heterosexual young woman inevitably shaped how I interacted with both the students I interviewed, as well as other members of organizations that I visited to speak about topics of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. I was an outsider, a foreigner, and a stranger to most of the students I interviewed, which evoked both curiosity and distrust. My position, particularly as a white U.S. citizen in the Dominican Republic came with many privileges, while at other times it was a possible source of distance and tension.

On one hand, many individuals were curious about the work I was doing and seemed interested to get to know me, partly because of my status as a foreigner. It is likely that some Haitian students were willing to talk to me because I am a young woman from the U.S. Because I am not Dominican, students may have felt more comfortable speaking negatively about their experiences with Dominicans or in the Dominican Republic. Additionally, I gained access to certain government agencies easily, something that was likely made possible because of my position as a white U.S. researcher.

My status as a university student helped me connect with Haitian students in certain cases, even though our specific experiences are vastly different. In addition, the fact that I am not a native Spanish speaker may have put some students at ease, as I too make grammatical errors and speak with an accent. However, language was also a limitation. While most students had at least a working knowledge of Spanish, I did not speak either of their native languages, Kreyòl or French, which reinforced my outsider status.

When I was in the Dominican Republic, I met Katharina Hauber, a German graduate student who was writing her American Studies master's thesis about Haitian university students

in the Dominican Republic. We collaborated throughout the process of collecting data; we interviewed students together and shared our recordings. She lived with Haitian university students in Santo Domingo and had developed close friendships with several students. Her friends were key in introducing us to other students for interviews.

Other times my background made people wary or reluctant to talk to me or divulge personal information. Especially since I was only in the Dominican Republic for two months, not nearly enough time to establish meaningful relationships with all of the students I interviewed, many students declined to delve into sensitive topics, especially regarding discrimination. It is quite understandable that many students were hesitant to talk to me because to most of them, I was a complete stranger.

Some students spent a significant amount of time asking me questions before agreeing to be interviewed. Usually, these students were curious to know the main goal of my project. While at that point the specific goals and conclusions of this thesis were hazy, I explained that I hoped to make the lived reality of Haitian university students more visible. Some students were enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk about the challenges of studying in the Dominican Republic. However, others still remained wary of me, and either continued with more questions or declined to be interviewed. These moments were particularly constructive – I heard about students concerns with my research project, concerns that I later took into account when conducting other interviews.

It is also important to recognize my different experience with race as a U.S. citizen and resident. Some questions I asked students were based on my U.S.-based understanding of race, which did not match the concepts of race in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti. At times this made conversations about racism and discrimination difficult, because of the different

perspectives. By the end of my stay, I had learned how to ask questions differently, nonetheless, it is important to recognize how this may have affected conversations about race, racism, and discrimination.

Another common question from students was why I was interested specifically in Haitian university students in the Dominican Republic. I decided on this topic based on conversations I had with Professor April Mayes in the spring of 2012. There was the opportunity to travel to the Dominican Republic with Professor Mayes to help with her research project in the Archivo General de la Nación and simultaneously conduct research for my senior thesis. I was interested in something related to education and I wanted my thesis to focus on individuals rather than larger trends or data. After a few conversations, it seemed that interviewing Haitian university students would be feasible and that it was a topic that had not garnered much attention or scholarship. From the beginning, I sought to highlight traditionally marginalized, individual voices that are not usually heard.

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ABBREVIATIONS

O&M	Universidad Dominicana de Organización y Método
OBMICA	Observatorio Migrantes del Caribe
SJRM	Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes
UASD	Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo
UCSD	Universidad Católica Santo Domingo
UNEV	Universidad Nacional Evangélica
UTESA	Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago (Recinto Santo Domingo de Guzmán)

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Haitian migrants living and working in the Dominican Republic face widespread discrimination and prejudice as a result of their lower class status and the perception they are racially distinct and culturally inferior to Dominicans. Historically, the majority of Haitian migrants to the Dominican Republic have been rural, lower class workers seeking agricultural jobs on sugar plantations. The U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) and Haiti (1915-1937), both increased sugar production and encouraged Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic to fill cane-cutting jobs. The flow of Haitian migrants across the border continued well beyond the departure of U.S. troops from the island and the Dominican sugar industry quickly grew dependent on cheap labor from Haiti. During General Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship (1930-1961) anti-Haitian sentiments became the base of the national project, yet a bracero guest worker program was also instated in the 1950s that allowed Haitians to work legally on Dominican sugar plantations during the harvest seasons. Gradually, the bracero program gave rise to bateyes, communities of Haitian workers and their descendants settled on the outskirts of the sugar cane fields who usually lived under conditions of extreme poverty. For over three decades, the great majority of immigrants were working adult males, and they remained relatively isolated from larger Dominican society in rural areas and bateyes.¹

In the 1980s, demand for Haitian labor decreased as the Dominican state diversified their export economy and privatized the sugar industry. This produced a shift in the Haitian migrant population, one that Rubén Silié and Wilfred Lozano identify as the new wave of migrants who are increasingly young, urban (both in sending and receiving communities), and diverse (in terms of gender, class, profession, and education). Although there is a lower demand for labor in the

¹ James Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean: Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Beyond* (United Kingdom: Minority Rights Group International, 2003), 10-12.

sugar industry, Haitians still provide low-cost labor for jobs in construction, domestic work, and other agricultural industries, such as coffee and fruit. It is important to note that the new wave of Haitian migrants is more integrated into the daily fabric of Dominican life; no longer isolated in rural areas, Haitians play important roles in Santo Domingo and other urban centers and live side by side with Dominicans. Within the new wave of Haitian immigrants, there has been a surge of yet another kind of immigrant in the past twenty years—Haitian students studying at Dominican universities.

My thesis examines the university students' lived experiences and the specific issues they face as foreign students. The position of the Haitian university student is particularly unique given the long history of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and Haiti's place in the Dominican Republic's national project. These university students are entering into new spaces of Dominican society that have traditionally been unoccupied by Haitians, yet Dominicans already have deep seated conceptions and prejudices towards these immigrants.

I focus specifically on Haitian university students in Santo Domingo using an interdisciplinary, ethnographic approach. I argue that Haitian students use a language of class to speak about discrimination and share a similar concept of an ethno-racial national identity as Dominicans. They also offer a unique perspective on Haiti and Haitian-Dominican relations as international students who have lived in both countries. My thesis will achieve two goals. First, I will present the lived experiences of Haitian university students through interviews and participant observation. Secondly, I will analyze their stories to address three larger concerns: antihaitianismo and discrimination in contemporary Dominican Republic; the role of language in discrimination and the immigrant experience; and the relationship between race and nation in Haiti. I argue that Haitian university students continue to be racialized in a similar way as

plantation and construction workers; however, the setting of the university, where Haitians and Dominicans are clearly peers, offers an environment where there is a greater possibility for less discrimination. My findings reveal that even though Haitian students continue to face discrimination and antihaitianismo outside the university setting, the acquisition of Spanish emerges as a key factor in how they are identified and treated in public settings. While much has been written about Dominican antihaitianismo, racialization, and migration, there have only been two studies specifically on Haitian university students. My work, therefore, will contribute to the very small but growing scholarship on this topic.

Presently, I will address three broader subjects before focusing directly on literature regarding Haitian migration: the relationship between nation, race, and identity in the Dominican Republic; theories of race and racialization in the Caribbean; and sociolinguistic theories of the connection between language, language acquisition, and social inequality. The most recent scholarship on nation, race, and identity in the Dominican Republic has focused on how ordinary Dominicans understand the relationship between color categories, their particular social position, and the continuing influence of antihaitianismo in contemporary Dominican identity. Together, Kimberly Eison Simmons, Ernesto Sagás, and David Howard draw complementary, yet nuanced conclusions in their examination of national identity in the Dominican Republic. I will place this scholarship in conversation with theoretical treatments of racialization and race in Latin America with the recent works of Peter Wade and Jorge Duany. While Duany identifies racialization as a common cause of the marginalization that “othered” immigrants face in receiving countries, Wade examines ideologies of hybridity and argues that while exclusionary, they make small steps towards tolerance by recognizing the minority groups.

Recent published works on Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic have identified a new wave of migration and subsequently, have tackled a variety of issues – ranging from human rights to cultural assimilation to labor markets. The diverse array of approaches creates a patchwork image of an increasingly diverse and complex population of migrants. My thesis is unique in applying sociolinguistic theories that expose connections between language acquisition, discrimination, and immigrant experience. Susan Phillips and Pierre Bourdieu outline theories linking inequality and language, while Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio study linguistic differences in Dominican Spanish based on the influence of Haitian Kreyòl on the border. Phillips and Bourdieu’s theory and Bullock and Toribio’s findings push my ethnography further, calling for a focus on the individual, lived experience of migrants by examining how their knowledge of Spanish affects their experience, as well as how they use language to talk about their lived experiences and personal identities.

I draw upon the methodological insights presented in two works to deepen and focus the analysis of interview material: *Negras in Brazil* by Kia Lily Caldwell, and “Racialization of the bilingual student in higher education: A case from the Peruvian Andes” by Virginia Zavala. Caldwell, who focuses on Black women in Brazil, emphasizes the value of not only examining how dominant state-sponsored ideologies have shaped individuals, but also considering participants’ responses to these ideologies and how they negotiate and resist racist discourses on a personal level. In conjunction, as a sociolinguist, Zavala argues that the perspectives, ideas, and language that participants use during interviews reveal what is important to them and the way they explain their thoughts becomes an additional object of analysis. This review will conclude with a brief discussion of literature regarding Haitian migration, as well as a chapter outline.

Recent scholarship examining national identity in the Dominican Republic has focused on race and ethnicity, specifically studying how Haiti and African heritage have shaped the national project and personal identities. David Howard lays fundamental groundwork by placing race, ethnicity, and Haiti at the center of the conversation, Ernesto Sagás focuses on antihaitianismo, while Kimberly Eison Simmons builds off their work and challenges the concept of Black denial.

While all three authors write against the national myth of racial harmony in the Dominican Republic, as well as its official image as a tropical paradise, Howard identifies his own work as a shift in recent literature concerning race in Latin America. While past scholarship regarding Blackness in the Americas has dealt with the race in the Caribbean by either omission or trivialization, Howard challenges this trend by placing race and ethnicity at the center of his examination of the Dominican Republic. Howard makes the case for seriously considering racial and ethnic identity by defining these terms within the context of the Dominican Republic. Before presenting his findings, Howard historically and geographically contextualizes key concepts, in particular he emphasizes both the difficulty and importance of discussing race. He recognizes the integral role of race in the national project, along with its risk of becoming conflated with false meanings if not contextualized properly. Howard clarifies that he deals with race in the context of the everyday language and labels that Dominicans use to talk about race, and acknowledges the fluid, performative nature of identity and race.

After making his language clear and analyzing his findings, Howard suggests that racial prejudice exists in all socioeconomic groups in the Dominican Republic to a similar extent. More specifically, he argues that antihaitianismo “remains a malignant form of racism that is

reproduced across all class groups and in every location.”² Additionally, he finds that racism devalues African influence in Dominican society and claims that most Dominicans do not see Blackness as central to their racial identity. He points to the use of the “indio” category on cédulas (government-issued ID cards) as an example of avoiding direct association between Dominicanidad and negritud. However, more recent scholarship has challenged the idea of “Black denial” and aims to recast the way African heritage has been downplayed both in the national project and individual identities. Simmons, for her part, problematizes Black denial, pointing out that while “denial” implies a negative response, Blackness and African influence is more often hidden “behind the ear”³ than rejected outright.⁴ Instead, Simmons proposes that African heritage has traditionally been denied to the Dominican people as part of whitening projects but recent efforts have been made to consciously unbury Dominican Blackness by scholars, intellectuals, and activists.

Simmons challenges many of Howard’s points, in particular the effects of Dominican migration to the U.S., where many Dominicans who do not consider themselves Black are labeled Black in the U.S. racial context. Howard’s findings reveal that the distinct ideas of race in the U.S. have had little impact on Dominican racial identities. However, Simmons argues just the opposite. She points to her participants that consider the experience of being labeled Black in the U.S. as an integral part of unburying African heritage and claiming Blackness. As migration to the U.S. increases, Dominicans come into contact with different “competing racial systems”⁵ that challenge how they self-identify. Upon return, their new ideas of race and identity affect the

² David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (United Kingdom: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 182.

³ Ginetta E.B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁴ Kimberly Eison Simmons, *Reconstructing Racial Identity and the African Past in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), 2.

⁵ Ibid., 116.

same processes of identity formation in the Dominican Republic.⁶ Although Simmons maintains, with Howard, that the state has promoted racist, anti-Haitian, and anti-Black national ideologies, she takes this argument one step further by suggesting that African influence, history, and identity has been consistently denied to citizens since the first U.S. occupation. She points to history textbooks, identity construction, and the collective memory of Dominicans over time as evidence. Although Simmons does not focus on Haiti and antihaitianismo, she does recognize antihaitianismo's central role in Dominican national identity.

Despite the different interpretations of race and ethnicity in the Dominican Republic, most scholars recognize antihaitianismo and the constructed image of Haiti as an essential part of Dominican national identity. All scholars recognize how Haiti has been constructed as the inferior neighbor, associated with Blackness, Vodou, and Kreyòl, in stark contrast to the Spanish-indigenous, Catholic, and Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic. Ernesto Sagás in particular delves into Haiti's role in shaping Dominican perceptions of race, nation, and identity through a closer look at antihaitianismo, a dominant ideology in the Dominican Republic.

Along with Howard and Simmons, Sagás exposes the racist, anti-Haitian ideologies crafted by the state under the guise of tropical racial harmony. Specifically, Sagás attempts to examine and demystify antihaitianismo, primarily analyzing it as an elite-driven nationalist ideology. The book outlines the evolution of antihaitianismo and how the Dominican Republic has consistently "othered" Haiti to create national unity since the early 1900s. Sagás argues that antihaitianismo creates a mirage of equality within the Dominican Republic because it locates Blackness and racism in the neighboring nation instead of at home. However, like Howard, Sagás points out that antihaitianismo and racism act on lower class and darker skinned Dominicans as well, supporting inequality and exclusionary attitudes within the country. This

⁶ Ibid., 116.

false sense of inclusion and equality is aided by the presentation of Haiti and Haitians as the scapegoat for many problems such as epidemics, unemployment, racism, and violence. Sagás emphasizes antihaitianismo's historical role as the cornerstone elite ideology for imagining the Dominican nation, perpetuating racism, and maintaining power over lower classes.

Our understanding of antihaitianismo is pushed further by Peter Wade's treatment of mestizaje, a nation-building ideology of hybridity with many similarities to antihaitianismo. As an anthropologist with a focus on Colombia, Wade reevaluates mestizaje by stressing the importance of examining the lived experience and embodiment of mestizaje. He argues that mestizaje implies a recognition and differentiation of races and ethnicities that result in a "mosaic image of national identity."⁷ Wade challenges "traditional" scholars who view mestizaje solely as an elite, exclusionary, nation-building ideology that marginalizes indigenusness and excludes Blackness while maintaining a "mask of inclusion." Instead, he argues that hybrid ideologies create a mosaic national identity, where the separate racial and cultural groups retain their respective identities while part of the same whole. By focusing on lived and embodied experiences of mestizaje, Wade proposes that in some way, however marginal, mestizaje recognizes and creates space for Blackness and indigenusness.

Conversely, Sagás interprets antihaitianismo the same way traditional scholars interpret mestizaje: as an elite, exclusionary ideology. *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* succeeds in tracing antihaitianismo as an elite-driven political tool, yet focuses less on the lived, embodied experience. Similarly, Sagás views antihaitianismo as a technique the state uses to distance itself from Blackness by "othering" Haiti and posing Haiti as a threat to the Dominican Republic, stealing jobs, creating crime, and "blackening" the country. Yet Wade's approach to

⁷ Peter Wade, "Rethinking *Mestizaje*: Ideology and Lived Experience," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 240.

mestizaje complicates Sagás's analysis of antihaitianismo on both the ideological level and the personal level.

Wade's treatment of nation-building ideologies reveals the fact that antihaitianismo acknowledges Haitianess and Blackness. Haiti has no means been invisible in the Dominican Republic, especially during the Trujillo dictatorship that turned the loose ends of antihaitianismo into a "dominant state-sponsored ideology" that focused on Haiti's "alien and pernicious presence."⁸ Images of Haiti, albeit often discriminatory, continue to frequent Dominican media, in particular, Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic is presented as an invasive, threatening force. Even though the images of Haiti are generally discriminatory and created by the Dominican state, not by Haiti or Haitians, Wade's approach argues that there is value in simply recognizing the existence of another culture.

Wade also pushes to look beyond the exclusionary, repressive effects of hybrid ideologies to examine what space is created for the excluded. Just as Wade's work points out that mestizaje is equally dependent upon indigenusness, Blackness, and whiteness, the national identity of the Dominican Republic is dependent upon its own constructed image of Haiti. Even though neither Haiti nor Haitians have a say in what role or image they project, Wade would argue that the many acknowledgements of Haiti could be positive because Haitians are being made a visible part of the national "mosaic", even though their role in that mosaic is negative. Simmons achieves Wade's approach to some extent in her work by highlighting the ways that Dominicans are reclaiming Blackness and African heritage. Instead of highlighting antihaitianismo as an "all-inclusive ideology of exclusion,"⁹ Simmons recognizes and underscores the African-influenced and Black pieces of Wade's national ethno-racial mosaic.

⁸ Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 45.

⁹ Wade, "Rethinking *Mestizaje*," 241.

Despite the positives that Wade's approach reveals, it is important to understand the longstanding anti-Haitian sentiments embedded in Dominican society that are often openly and consciously acknowledged. We can understand that (especially for Haitians and darker skinned, lower class Dominicans) the Dominican Republic is an environment where there is an exclusion and recognition of Haitianess and Blackness, just as the state simultaneously denies and underhandedly promotes racism through exclusionary immigration policies.

The second part of Wade's argument is a request to examine the lived experience of *mestizaje*, which in this case moves the conversation to the lived experience of *antihaitianismo*. While the lived experience of *antihaitianismo* is not a main focus, to some extent Sagás, Simmons, and Howard all examine how *antihaitianismo* affects self-identification among Dominicans. However, the effects of *antihaitianismo* on Haitians, especially Haitians living in the Dominican Republic, are largely left unexplored. Some of the effects may be assumed based on the nature and history of *antihaitianismo*: Haitian immigrants are discriminated against in public spaces, face uncertainty in legal and migration issues, and frequently are exploited in low paying, difficult jobs. Nevertheless, the details of this experience and the effects on their personal identities have yet to be explored. What does the embodied experience of being othered feel like?

This question clearly points to the body as the site of reading and assigning race, class, nationality, and ethnicity. Simmons, Howard, and Caldwell talk about hair as being a signifier of race and the distinction between good hair and bad hair. Hair styles, skin color, other physical features, and clothing all contribute to how other people read and place a body in racial categories. Jorge Duany outlines and applies a key theoretical framework to understand the role of the body in the lived experience of *antihaitianismo*.

Duany argues that racialization, a process of othering, has contributed significantly to the marginalization that ethnic or racial “other” immigrants experience in a receiving country. Contrary to Howard, who works to define and distinguish ethnicity and race, Duany recognizes the difficulty of trying to separate the two in the context of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, noting that ethnicity and race “frequently overlap in people’s lived experiences.”¹⁰ Duany defines racialization as “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.”¹¹ Racialization is a key part of antihaitianismo, as Haitians and Dominicans are differentiated, creating two constructed races each with their own assigned attributes and stereotypes. This process involves minimizing internal differences (antihaitianismo creates the mirage of being all-inclusive, presenting all Dominicans as equal) and emphasizing differences between groups (Haitians are , Kreyòl-speaking, and practice Vodou, while Dominicans are Spanish-indigenous, Spanish-speaking, and Catholic). It requires a key assumption that the different traits of the othered group are natural, involuntary, and enduring, which is illustrated in the anti-Haitian sentiment that Haiti is fundamentally different than the Dominican Republic, despite much shared history and geographic proximity.

Most importantly, Duany identifies the body as the site where racialization occurs and provides two examples: Dominicans racialized in Puerto Rico and Haitians racialized in the Dominican Republic. In particular, I consider racialization a crucial part to understanding the embodiment of antihaitianismo for all individuals involved. Duany explores the experience of both being racialized and racializing others, unlike Sagás, Simmons, and Howard who primarily address the latter. He focuses on the differences in self-identity and experience between Dominicans in the Dominican Republic, where they define themselves against Black Haitians,

¹⁰ Jorge Duany, “Racializing Ethnicity in the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean,” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 1.2 (2006): 234.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

and Dominicans in Puerto Rico, where they are the ones racialized. In Puerto Rico, Dominicans fill a similar role as Haitians in the Dominican Republic – they are othered as Black, backward, lazy, and immoral. Although Duany touches on the Haitian experience in the Dominican Republic, he never fully delves into it. Instead he poses this very pertinent question: “How do the immigrants resolve this incongruence between their traditional self-perception and their reception abroad?”¹² He goes further to answer this question for Dominicans than Haitians, but it may be because there is seemingly less incongruence for Haitians. Haitians openly accept Black identity and are generally proud of their African heritage. Upon arrival in the Dominican Republic, they are labeled as Black, except now Black has a different definition and comes with a negative stereotype. Even though there may not be a change between how they self identify and their new label, there is still have the complex and difficult experience of coming into a country where being labeled as Black means something different and holds different connotations and assumptions.

My thesis aims to address Duany’s question, as well as the lived experience of being on the receiving end of antihaitianismo. What does it feel like to be othered? What does it feel like to have the meaning of your own identity label change? Using Sagás, Simmons, and Howard’s knowledge base about racial formation and identities in the Dominican Republic, my analysis is pushed further by Wade and Duany’s theories. They ask for a more personal approach to examine how ideologies are embodied and experienced on an individual level.

Duany identifies language as being one key element of how racialization is lived out. Especially on the island of Hispaniola, with African, Taino, Spanish, and French influences, historically, language and how individuals use language to express themselves have been important markers of race, class, and nationality. Since the Trujillo dictatorship, Haitians have

¹² Ibid., 239.

been increasingly racialized and depicted as inferior to Dominicans and language plays a key role in these processes. As Sagás points out, antihaitianismo depicts Haitian Kreyòl as an impure mix with African influences that clearly point to its inferiority to Spanish. Not only does speaking Kreyòl identify Haitian migrants in public spaces in the Dominican Republic, but also Haitian migrants' acquisition of Spanish affects their experience as a migrant and their interactions with Dominicans. Specifically, sociolinguist scholars Susan Phillips and Pierre Bourdieu link discrimination to the socially constructed hierarchy of languages while Bullock and Toribio examine the unequal valuing of different accents and languages on the Hispaniola.

First and foremost, Bourdieu calls for the need to view language and linguistic exchanges within a “social-historical”¹³ context that takes into account the practical, everyday usage of language. With this perspective in mind, he also establishes that languages or sets of linguistic practices are unequally valued by society. In colonial contexts of extensive conflict one language often emerges as the dominant and legitimate language while other languages and dialects are eliminated or subordinated.¹⁴ In this context where languages and accents have unequal values, Bourdieu takes his argument further by proposing that individuals can better their socio-economic position through language or what he coins as “symbolic capital” and Phillips explains as “cultural capital.” These terms refer to the achieved and acquired sociocultural attributes that are highly valued in a society.¹⁵ Phillips expands Bourdieu's propositions by clarifying that the differentiation in value and persuasiveness of language forms plays a central role in the construction of social inequalities.¹⁶ Phillips explores the application of Bourdieu's theories in various settings. In the section “Language and Political Economy” she sustains that just as

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (United States: Polity Press, 1991), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ Susan U. Phillips, “Language and Social Inequality,” in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 475.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 467.

society regards the lower classes with less prestige and value, the codes and language forms they use are similarly devalued. Overall, Phillips emphasizes that the unequal values placed on different variations of language indicate more than just the presence social inequalities; they also indicate that certain ideologies are esteemed more highly over others. She demonstrates that language is just one manifestation of wider systemic historical inequalities, an idea that Bullock and Toribio's work also supports.

In "Kreyòl Incursions into Dominican Spanish," Bullock and Toribio reveal key findings integral to understanding the unequal prestige assigned to Kreyòl and different forms of Dominican Spanish. Additionally, the study provides an example of how linguistic analysis can be used to address race and class issues. Fronterizo Spanish, or Spanish spoken along the border with Haiti, is often stigmatized as "bad" Spanish and labeled as "Haitianized." Bullock and Toribio aim to find out if the "Haitianized" Spanish spoken near the northern border with Haiti has Kreyòl influences or if this claim reflects perceptions of regional and racial stereotypes. Participants listened to various recordings of Dominicans speaking about the same topic, and made guesses to the race and class of the speaker, in addition to indicating the prestige or quality of the speaker's pronunciation, style, and grammar. Their findings reveal that even though the fronterizo Spanish does not have Kreyòl-influenced characteristics, Dominicans deem the same forms of speaking as "Haitianized" as the ones to which they assign low prestige. Although the participants could not accurately judge the race of the speakers, participants consistently ascribed low prestige to the speakers they judged to be of low socioeconomic class, low education level, and darker skin or African descent.

Even though the participants could not accurately guess speakers' race and class, Bullock and Toribio point out that language can race and class individuals in the Dominican Republic. In

the everyday setting, sociolinguists have established that “linguistic varieties can trigger assumptions about speakers’ personal attributes, social standing, and ethnic and national affiliations.”¹⁷ In the hierarchy of language forms in the Dominican Republic, the kind that is most associated with being poor, rural, and Black is not only ascribed the lowest prestige, but also accused of being “Haitianized.” The term “Haitianized” does not refer to Haitians’ use of Spanish, conversely, Bullock and Toribio aptly note that many field interviews have maintained that Haitians are much better language learners than Dominicans.¹⁸ In my own research, language and language learning emerged as an important part of the experience as a foreign student, as most participants spoke Kreyòl, French, and Spanish (some spoke English as well). Their level of Spanish greatly affected how comfortable they felt in class, how much they interacted with Dominican students, and personal independence in Santo Domingo. To explore these specific sociolinguistic issues in addition to addressing broader themes such as antihaitianismo, I follow the methodologies of Zavala and Caldwell.

My methodology focuses on the individual voices and stories based on ethnographic interviews. Caldwell’s ethnography of Black women in Brazil and Zavala’s linguistic study of the racialization of bilingual university students in the Peruvian Andes guide my study of Haitian university students. Caldwell presents her work as an “ethnographic analysis of subjectivity”¹⁹ that focuses on how gender and race are lived and interpreted on an individual level instead of how they are constructed by dominant social discourses. In regard to the relationship between the national project and the individual, Caldwell argues for a holistic view that takes into account the

¹⁷ Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio, “Kreyòl Incursions into Dominican Spanish: The Perception of Haitianized Speech Among Dominicans” in *Bilingualism and Identity: Spanish at the Crossroads with Other Languages*, eds. Mercedes Niño-Murcia and Jason Rothman (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2008), 184.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁹ Kia Lilly Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 14.

effect of the dominant ideology on identity formation, as well as the individual's response. I will apply these methods in my thesis by highlighting Haitian students' opinions on the dominant racist ideology of antihaitianismo, instead of merely assessing how they are affected by it. In turn, Zavala's work has directed how I will analyze the interviews. As a linguist, Zavala argues that regardless of the truthfulness of the interviewees' stories, participants "create meanings in social interaction with the interviewer while reflecting upon social practices."²⁰ Thus, the language participants use to describe their thoughts and the way they structure their responses is an important element of the interview to analyze. Zavala reminds us that the language that participants use shapes their social world, as well as their identities, interpersonal relationships, and the way they situate themselves in the world. Caldwell and Zavala's methodologies push my interview material further to address larger concepts of race and nation, antihaitianismo, and the role of language in the foreign student experience.

Other authors who focus specifically on Haitian migration address these broader themes, in addition to exposing other contemporary issues of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. Paul Brodwin explores Haitian immigrant assimilation and reception in Guadeloupe, while Wilfredo Lozano, Bridget Wooding, and Rubén Silié each outline distinct aspects of what they define as "la nueva inmigración haitiana"²¹ in the Dominican Republic.

Brodwin's work contrasts other literature regarding Haitian migration because the attitude towards Haitians in Guadeloupe is very different from the Dominican Republic. Brodwin notes that Guadeloupeans regard Haitian immigrants with a mixture of scorn and jealousy. While Haitians are ascribed similar negative outsider stereotypes as in the Dominican Republic, to Guadeloupeans, they also represent more "authentic" Afro-Caribbeans. In Guadeloupe, still

²⁰ Virginia Zavala, "Racialization of the bilingual student in higher education: A case from the Peruvian Andes," *Linguistics and Education* 22 (2011): 395.

²¹ Rubén Silié et al., *La nueva inmigración haitiana*, (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: FLACSO, 2002).

officially an overseas territory of France, “Haitian migrants elicit envy and resentment because they embody what Guadeloupeans feel they have lost in the process of assimilation”²² to French culture. While Haitians invoke jealousy by reminding Guadeloupeans of their lost “authentic” Afro-Caribbean culture, conversely Haiti represents a negative potential outcome of Guadeloupe if they were to become independent. Guadeloupeans can clearly see the consequences of independence in Haiti, a poor struggling nation with few economic opportunities. However, it is evident that Guadeloupeans interpret and value Haitians’ pride in African heritage in a different way than Dominicans. Brodwin demonstrates the cultural value placed on Blackness by Guadeloupeans as authentic and more powerful, as Haitian Vodou is considered to be more powerful than local practices.

Brodwin also notes a common feature of Haitian migration that Haitians establish “new enclaved communities at a symbolic distance from the receiving society”²³ instead of permanently cutting off ties with Haiti and relatives or fully assimilating to the receiving country. Rubén Silié notices similar trends in his overview study of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, although his main argument rests on his findings that the immigrant population is increasingly young, urban, feminine, educated, Spanish speaking, and integrated.²⁴ Silié outlines specific shifts in the Haitian immigrant population that call for the reevaluation of Dominicans’ perception of Haiti and Haitians. Haitians in the Dominican Republic are no longer restricted to bateyes and rural areas; rather they have a wide variety of jobs and are an integral part of urban daily life. As Haitians have increased presence and integration in Dominican

²² Paul Brodwin, “Marginality and Subjectivity in the Haitian Diaspora,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 76.3 (2003): 400.

²³ Ibid., 388.

²⁴ Silié et al., *La nueva inmigración haitiana*, 11.

society, we must examine if negative, anti-Haitian stereotypes are broken or if Haiti becomes a closer, more familiar threat.

Silié and Wooding both focus on descendants of Haitian migrants born in the Dominican Republic, yet another way that Haitians are increasingly integrated into Dominican society. In contrast to first generation immigrants, descendants of immigrants are often more culturally Dominican, but their lack of citizenship and the discrimination that their families face make their situation precarious and unpredictable. Especially in regard to accessing primary and secondary public education, the Dominican government has recently attempted to ban undocumented children from schools. In *Needed but Unwanted*, Wooding focuses on issues of citizenship for Haitians and their descendants and frames them within the human rights context. Lozano takes a decidedly different approach to Haitian migration by focusing on labor markets and economic reasons for the “new” Haitian migration. Lozano’s work emphasizes that although Haitians continue to occupy the lower rungs of Dominican society, they are no longer solely confined to low wage agricultural jobs; rather they hold increasingly diverse professions.²⁵ My work will address how Haitian migrants’ place and perception in Dominican society has changed as a result of their entry into new professions and spaces. In particular, I will focus on how university students are treated differently or similarly as the traditional Haitian migrant low-wage laborer.

Chapter 1 will give a more detailed history of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, including an overview of university student migration to the Dominican Republic. Here, I aim to contextualize my study within recent waves of migration and present the main issues facing students through the discussion of recent legislation, news stories, and other relevant studies.

²⁵ Wilfredo Lozano and Bridget Wooding, eds., *Los retos del desarrollo insular* (Dominican Republic: FLACSO, 2008), 175.

The second chapter presents my ethnographic findings based on interviews and participant observation. I will focus on students' motives for coming to the Dominican Republic for higher education, contact with Dominicans inside and outside the university, and their plans for after graduation. Other main topics include the 2010 earthquake, finances, and Haitian student organizations. Additionally, I will compare my findings to those of the other three existing studies on Haitian university students by Kiran Jayaram, Frank D'Oleo, and the non-profit organization, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes (SJRM).

The next section frames their responses to discrimination as an alternative perspective on antihaitianismo and as an insight into the experience of being othered. Dominicans and the Dominican government have many discussions situating themselves in relation to Haiti, but rarely do we hear Haitians' experiences of antihaitianismo. In this study, Haitian students' viewpoints will illuminate the nuances of antihaitianismo and differences within the Haitian migrant population.

Chapter 4 will examine how language acquisition and students' level of Spanish affects their experience in the university and in Dominican society. Drawing from Bourdieu and Zavala's theories, this chapter explores how language is used to maintain social inequalities and discrimination as a part of antihaitianismo.

Lastly, the conclusion will present students' transnational, unique perspectives on Haiti and Haitian-Dominican relations. Furthermore, I will explore the relationship between race and nation and outline key considerations to take when examining the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

CHAPTER 1

History of Haitian Migration to the Dominican Republic and the Rise of Antihaitianismo

This chapter will focus on background history and information crucial to understanding Haitian university students' current situation. First I will trace the history of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and the rise of antihaitianismo under Trujillo's dictatorship. I will bring antihaitianismo and Haitian migration to the present, evaluating how each operates currently. Next is a brief summary of non-profit and activist initiatives fighting for immigrant rights, followed by an overview of Haitian university student migration and the main issues they face today. I explore other education issues in the Dominican Republic including the struggle of Haitian-Dominicans (Dominican-born people of Haitian descent) for access to education. Lastly, I contextualize Haitian university students within larger issues of international student migration.

The history of the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic goes back to colonial times, when the island was divided between French and Spanish colonies. In the transition from colony to republic, the two countries engaged in starkly different independence projects, resulting in equally distinct founding values of their national identities. After a long and bloody slave uprising against the French army and plantation owners, Haiti achieved independence in 1804 as the world's first Black republic. The Haitian Revolution was a watershed moment in colonial history, as it upended racial and class hierarchies – the very hierarchies that the entire colonial economy and society were rooted in. On the other hand, the Dominican Republic remained a colony of Spain for many years after Haiti gained its independence. Fearing European invasion, Haiti occupied the entire island under president Jean-Pierre Boyer from 1822 to 1843. The Dominican Republic gained independence back from Haiti in 1844 and invited Spanish rule back to their side of the island, priding themselves in their

Spanish-influenced culture. At this time, Haiti was much more wealthy and prosperous and the Dominican Republic sought European protection in reinstating colonial rule. Finally in 1865 the Dominican Republic gained a “second” independence from Spain in 1865.

From the two nations’ stories of independence came two very different identities. On one hand, the Haitian nation was founded as a result of a liberation movement by slaves who prided themselves in their connection to Africa. Conversely, the Dominican Republic found pride in its Spanish cultural influences, sometimes labeled “pro-Hispanism,” the valuing of the Catholic, Spanish-speaking, and mestizo nation over what they saw as the Vodou, Kreyòl-speaking, Black, ex-slave republic. The two nations have a history of difference and conflict that produced “a lasting Dominican belief in Hispanic nationalism and suspicion of Haitian intentions.”¹ However, the racism and xenophobia present today in the Dominican Republic have stronger roots in Trujillo’s nationalist, anti-Haitian project during the greater part of the 20th century than the more distant colonial past. In the early 20th century, the beginning of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, Haitian migrants did not face any more hostility than other Caribbean migrants who came to the country.

Since the settling of Hispaniola sugar has been an important export, but during the U.S. occupations of Haiti (1915-1937) and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) sugar became a primary export, and production increased greatly. Most plantations in the Dominican Republic were owned by U.S. companies and exported almost exclusively to the United States. Haitian labor was actively encouraged by U.S. military and, from the outset of Haitian migration, Dominicans were employed in higher positions as overseers or administrative positions. The laborious and dangerous work of cutting cane was reserved for Haitians, as Dominicans

¹ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted: Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), 19.

considered it too low class as it paid poorly and was extremely physical work. This is a sentiment that has continued to the present day, as cane cutting remains a racialized job that only Haitians and the very lowest class of Dominicans are expected to perform. Haiti had been a plantation economy with harsh slavery all the way up until independence; however, the Dominican Republic did not have the same history of slavery and plantation economy.² During the U.S. occupation of Hispaniola, Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic to cut cane became common and established, consisting almost entirely of young to middle-aged men. Gradually, Haitians replaced the *cocolos*, migrants from parts of the English-speaking Caribbean who had previously worked on sugar plantations.

As Haitian labor migration to the Dominican Republic continued to fill cane-cutting jobs to support the booming sugar industry, Trujillo cultivated increasingly anti-Haitian sentiments towards the very workers who were key to ensuring the economic success of the country. Antihaitianismo reached arguably its most visible stage during the “Parsley Massacre” of 1937, when thousands of Haitians and dark-skinned Dominicans were murdered in the border region of the island by Dominican troops. Trujillo ordered Dominican troops to kill anyone who appeared to be Haitian – based mostly upon dark skin color and language (Kreyòl or Kreyòl accented Spanish would reveal residents as Haitian). An estimated 1,000 – 30,000 Haitians were executed in 1937.³ This year also coincided with a fall in world sugar prices, making migrant labor even more vulnerable to xenophobic aggression. The name Parsley Massacre comes from the story that Dominican soldiers held up sprigs of parsley to get border residents to pronounce “perejil” (parsley in Spanish), which has a trilled “r” sound that is difficult for Haitians to pronounce. However, most Haitian sugar cane workers who worked on U.S. company owned land were

² Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

spared, Trujillo did not want to push Roosevelt's tolerance of his dictatorship too far.⁴ At this point, Trujillo did not own sugar plantations and the massacre was more of a political warning to Haiti and a first attempt to militarize the border.

Throughout the 1930s, immigration policies aimed at discouraging Haitian migration and encouraging European migration formed the backbone of Trujillo's whitening project. There were also policies specifying exactly how much of a company's workforce could be foreign, although this was specifically aimed at employing more Dominicans and making companies unable to hire more Haitians. As Ferguson points out, these whitening policies were not exceptional in Latin America during this time, but "what was distinctive in the Dominican Republic was that 'Dominicanisation' formed part of a racist ideology which the dictatorship put forward after the massacre."⁵ In the 1930s, Trujillo laid the groundwork for antihaitianismo, what would become a powerful nation-building ideology that would also shape the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as between Haitians and Dominicans. Trujillo launched a cultural and ideological attack on Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic by devaluing and scandalizing their culture, and by extension, the culture of lower class, dark-skinned Dominicans. Trujillo was at once brutally anti-Haitian and dependent upon Haitian labor.⁶

For decades, Haitians filled jobs that were undesirable for Dominicans. Through the U.S. occupation and into the 1930s, when the U.S. owned most of the sugar companies in the Dominican Republic, Haitian workers were temporarily or seasonally contracted to come to work the sugar fields. The bracero-type contracts were arranged through the U.S.-owned sugar companies instead of the state. However, once the U.S. moved out of the Dominican Republic,

⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 20.

⁶ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 10.

Trujillo took over most of the sugar plantations and in 1952 began bilateral agreements between the Haitian government, then under dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier, to facilitate a bracero guest worker program.⁷ Haitian workers were contracted for five years of work, although many overstayed this time period.⁸ Additionally, the official state-sponsored contracts could never fill the demand during the harvest season, further increasing the undocumented Haitian migration. After Trujillo’s death in 1961, the Consejo Estatal de Azúcar (CEA) was formed to take over the sugar plantations previously owned by Trujillo, and the bracero guest worker program continued until 1986. During the 1960s while Haiti was under the Duvalier dictatorship, there were tensions between the two neighboring island nations, the border was militarized, and most migration was stopped, with the exception of Haitian workers for the sugar industry.⁹ The CEA monetarily rewarded both François Duvalier and his son and successor, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier for continuing to supply cheap Haitian labor to fuel the sugar export economy.¹⁰

However, during this time period, the guest worker program became less seasonal and more permanent. There was a high demand for work during harvest season, but during the off-season while the cane was growing, there was very little work. Initially, most workers returned to Haiti during the off-season, but this began to change. Many workers started to stay during the off-season, because it was cheaper to stay in the Dominican Republic rather than pay for the trip back to Haiti, and because they could find other agricultural work in tobacco, coffee, and produce industries. Gradually, bateyes (makeshift settlements) started forming around sugar plantations, centered around the temporary housing meant for seasonal workers. Batey populations grew as more workers remained through the off-season and brought or started

⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 22.

⁹ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

families in the Dominican Republic. The original structures of the bateyes were never designed to be permanent dwellings, but they became settlements of braceros and undocumented workers, usually characterized by conditions of extreme poverty.¹¹

Heavy recruiting, both official and illegal, was used to entice Haitians to work and live on the bateyes, especially for the harvest season when demand for work was high. Recruiters were paid for the workers they brought over and tactics used to recruit were extremely questionable and usually involved deceit. Many times workers would not receive fair pay and their promised health services or work contracts were not completed or completely false.¹² Additionally, the living conditions of the bateyes were extremely poor, most lacked basic living necessities such as drinking water, sanitation facilities, medical services, and schools. Bateyes were constructed from ramshackle housing, and residents were vulnerable to abuse from police, plantations owners, and superiors.¹³ On top of the terrible conditions of the bateyes, cutting cane is a dangerous and arduous job. Without easy access to quality health care, workers were even more at risk for injury and illness. During the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, there was international pressure on the Dominican state to investigate human rights abuses on bateyes and take measures to improve conditions. This coincided with the decline in the sugar industry as well as the failure of the CEA, which was poorly run, bureaucratic, and inefficient.¹⁴ When the CEA privatized, conditions in bateyes became even worse, as individual sugar companies were now responsible for providing services to batey residents, which had previously been the CEA's responsibility. Although less common, bateyes are still prevalent throughout the Dominican Republic and continue to be some of the poorest communities in the nation.

¹¹ Ibid., 11.

¹² Ibid., 11.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

Throughout the Trujillo period and onward, Haitian migration was largely rural (both in sending and receiving communities) and consisted of mostly uneducated, working-class men who worked long hours in the cane fields. While in the early 20th century most migrants were seasonal, within several decades, bateyes were established and expanded. Haitian women and children also settled in bateyes in the Dominican Republic. Most Haitian migrants remained relatively isolated, limited to rural regions, in bateyes or near plantations. Haitians did not have a strong presence in urban areas until the mid 1980s. When migration became more urban, most Dominicans still had the image of Haitians as rural, poor cane cutters.

Even after Trujillo's death in 1961, antihaitianismo continued to be influential throughout Dominican society and in its political discourse.¹⁵ Trujillo's former collaborators, most notably, Joaquín Balaguer, continued the project of antihaitianismo by solidifying Haiti's image in the Dominican imagination as detrimental to all aspects of Dominican society and equating Haiti with poverty, ignorance, and contagious diseases.¹⁶ Balaguer's writings also reinforced the myth of the white Dominican, by ignoring the country's history of slavery and casting Haiti as an imperial force, threatening to "blacken" the country. These attitudes were supported and sustained by Dominican elites and the media, attitudes that in turn were reproduced by lower and middle-class Dominicans.¹⁷ Balaguer became a leading political figure, he served as president seven times and greatly shaped the nation with his anti-Haitian policies. Antihaitianismo and the racism tied to it continue to be a powerful force in contemporary Dominican politics. In the 1990s, racist and anti-Haitian propaganda was used against José Francisco Peña Gómez, a Black presidential candidate of Haitian descent. Although Peña Gómez led in most opinion polls

¹⁵ Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 69.

¹⁶ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 21.

¹⁷ Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 90.

throughout the race, anti-Haitian and racist tactics was enough to give his opponent, Leonel Fernández, the victory.¹⁸

Despite the rise of antihaitianismo during and after Trujillo's dictatorship, Haitian migration has continued and increased. In recent years, scholars have identified what they call "la nueva inmigración haitiana" to describe the changing characteristics of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic since the mid-1980s. Since the 1980s, Haiti has struggled economically and dealt with frequent political turmoil, engulfed in an extended state of electoral crisis and insecurity.¹⁹ After the military ousting of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986, for several years the country was ruled by a series of transitional governments, paramilitary groups, and military governments. Troops prevented citizens from voting in elections and there was widespread violence throughout the nation. Popular attempts at democracy provoked two violent coups, first in 1991 and again in 2004, both of which were backed by a range of elites and armed groups.²⁰

However, a popular movement propelled Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic liberation theology priest, to victory in democratic elections in 1990. Only a year later, the military staged a coup d'état and ruled the country until 1994 when U.S. troops intervened in "Operation Uphold Democracy" to force the military rulers to step down. Aristide was reinstated and in 1996 Haiti had its first peaceful transition of power, when René Préval assumed presidency.²¹ Aristide assumed presidency once again in 2001, but not for long. In 2004, a movement against Aristide gained enough momentum to overthrow his government, which turned into a violent rebellion across the country involving the military and paramilitary groups. During 2004 and 2005, Haiti

¹⁸ Ibid., 112.

¹⁹ Robert Fatton Jr., "Haiti in the Aftermath of the Earthquake: The Politics of Catastrophe," *Journal of Black Studies* 42.2 (2011):167.

²⁰ Jeb Sprague, "Paramilitaries in Haiti," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 64.4 (2012): 27.

²¹ Ibid., 27.

was particularly dangerous, despite the presence of UN peacekeeping forces.²² After two years of brutal military rule, René Préval assumed presidency once again and in 2011, Michel Martelly was elected.²³ The recent decades of Haiti's history have been marked by instability, political crisis, military and paramilitary uprisings.²⁴

Meanwhile, the Dominican Republic was in the midst of a long drawn out transition from dictatorship to democracy, and the 1980s brought major economic adjustment with the decline in the sugar industry and neoliberal pressures from the U.S. These economic changes also brought along changes in the kinds of work that were available to Dominicans and Haitians. With less demand for sugar and privatization of the industry, the Dominican Republic aimed to diversify and expand its economy. Subsequently, fewer jobs were available for Haitians as cane cutters, but as the economy expanded into other industries, there were new low paying jobs that Dominicans did not want that became available for Haitians. Since the 1980s, Haitian labor has fueled coffee, rice, tobacco, and vegetable commerce, construction, manufacturing, and tourism industries. Demand for cheap labor has broadened alongside the diversification of economy.²⁵ Even after the decline of sugar, cheap Haitian labor remains essential to the Dominican economy, even as Haitians continue to face discrimination and racism throughout the country.

The new wave of Haitian migrants is characterized by being younger, urban (in terms of sending and receiving communities), and increasingly diverse (in terms of gender, profession, education, and class). Haitians in the Dominican Republic are no longer exclusively males in rural regions cutting cane, rather they have become part of the fabric of daily Dominican urban life, selling fruit on the street corner, building at construction sites, performing domestic and

²² Ibid., 28.

²³ Ibid., 33.

²⁴ Fatton, "Haiti in the Aftermath of the Earthquake," 167.

²⁵ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 16.

cleaning jobs, and part of markets and informal trade. They also engage in other agricultural work such as coffee, fruits, and vegetables, and form an important part of the tourist industry in service jobs. In contrast to the traditional Haitian migration, much of which was contracted through the official bracero program, a vast amount of Haitian labor is now in the informal sector. Migration remains largely unregulated due to a poorly secured border, easy exit and entry, and the prevalence of available unregulated work in the Dominican Republic.²⁶ In some ways, the nature of the work in the informal economy makes Haitian migrants even more vulnerable to exploitation, deportation, and abuse. Furthermore, it is even more difficult to collect accurate information about migrants because most of the work is in the informal sector. In the 1990s there were several mass deportations that raised questions of human rights abuses. Many migrants stay in the Dominican Republic for extended periods of time instead of coming and going seasonally, changing jobs and locations frequently to avoid detention and deportation.²⁷ It is also common for Haitians to come to the Dominican Republic because of encouragement and support through kin networks already established in the Dominican Republic.

Although many characteristics of Haitian migration have changed since the 1980s, it continues to be at once essential and widely disparaged, just as it was during Trujillo's rule. Haitian migration offers a "reservoir of cheap labor, which is non-unionized and easy to exploit. Meanwhile, Dominican politicians and the media often depict them as a problem, as a drain on a poor country's limited resources."²⁸ Now not only limited to plantation work, Haitians provide a wide range of vital services throughout Dominican society.

²⁶ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 14.

²⁷ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 4.

²⁸ Ibid.

With the insertion into the Dominican urban economy, the “typical” Haitian immigrant has changed. Women are increasingly at the forefront of Haitian migration, motivated by growing education and economic aspirations, and the expansion into other sectors such as domestic services offers more opportunities for women to find work.²⁹ While the average Haitian immigrant in the mid-20th century was a cane cutter in a rural region, currently, the average male Haitian immigrant is a construction worker in an urban area, while most women engage in domestic service or informal trade. However, even though the nature of migration has changed, the exploitation of low-paid workers continues, as well as the image of Haitians as uneducated, poor, and unsophisticated.

How has antihaitianismo changed since the fall of Trujillo and the major changes in the nature of Haitian migration, the jobs Haitians hold in the Dominican Republic, and the contexts in which Haitians and Dominicans interact? Even though Haitians and Dominicans interact regularly in urban settings, the image of the uneducated Haitian cane cutter is still popular in the Dominican imagination. Additionally, Ferguson notes that “fear of invasion remains a potent myth in the dominant collective psyche, as does the belief that Dominican culture is intrinsically different from, and better than, Haitian culture.”³⁰ There continues to be frequent negative press coverage concerning Haiti, presenting the nation as a threatening force that plans to invade the Dominican Republic. Haiti is also presented as a force that keeps the Dominican Republic from progressing, by spreading and harboring diseases, destroying the environment, and burdening resources that are already stretched thin, such as education and health. In the overview of Haitian migration in the Dominican Republic, Bridget Wooding expressed that the researchers were

repeatedly struck by the prevalence of myths and false or insufficiently grounded judgments about Haitian immigrants and Haitian-Dominicans. Such prejudices and

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

unsafe assumptions are not only to be found where one would expect them to be, among the minority of Dominicans who hold racist and anti-Haitian views. They have also influenced many scholars, experts, and NGOs.³¹

Authors of *Needed But Unwanted*, a study of Haitian immigrants and Haitian-Dominicans in the Dominican Republic published in 2004, identified four major myths surrounding Dominicans' perceptions of Haitians, the first three being that Haitian laborers are passive victims, Haitians remain unassimilated and are essentially Haitian (unable to fit into Dominican culture and inherently different), and that Haitian immigration is detrimental to Dominican economic development, society, culture, and national identity. The last myth they identified was "the belief that discrimination against those of Haitian descent is uniquely caused by racism and anti-Haitianism and that this is separate from the social divisions and inequities that exist in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti."³² This last myth separates racism and antihaitianismo from class and color prejudices present in the Dominican Republic. However, the Dominican Republic remains a very class and color conscious society. Haitians serve as a reference point at the bottom of the scale in color and class, and also located conveniently outside the country so the problem ceases to be within the Dominican Republic. As Sagás reminds us, antihaitianismo's primary application continues to be domestic rather than foreign:

Rather than a foreign policy directive, antihaitianismo ideology is really a domestic political tool, geared toward the maintenance of an inequitable social order and the preservation of elite privileges. Masterful in its use of political disguise, antihaitianismo ideology confuses the foreign and domestic political realms in its ultranationalist discourse, just as it confuses race, nation, and ethnicity. Thus antihaitianismo ideology has a Janus face: seemingly foreign issues are really domestic, while domestic issues have a foreign nexus. This foreign domestic link is an element of continuity in the long and intricate history of antihaitianismo ideology in the Dominican Republic.³³

³¹ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 11.

³² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

³³ Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 116.

The current state of Haitian migration reflects a continuation of the changes that started to take place in the 1980s as part of the “new” Haitian migration. The character of Haitian migration has continued to diversify, as Haitians find jobs in more sectors of the economy. The Haitian and Dominican states continue to fail to control the influx of migrant workers, leaving undocumented workers vulnerable to human rights abuses, widespread prejudice and discrimination, and xenophobia.³⁴ Although progressive sectors of Dominican society, aided by social movements and non-profits have begun to make progress in combatting discrimination and antihaitianismo, there is still a long way to go. Just as the sugar industry was dependent on cheap migrant labor, new powerful Dominican interests now depend on the “constant supply of cheap and compliant labor”³⁵ that has become extremely integrated into the new economic system. Subsequently, politicians have been unwilling to implement measures to effectively regulate or decrease undocumented migration and the issue has been repeatedly pushed aside for decades.

The earthquake in 2010 also caused a surge in migration to the Dominican Republic, as millions of Haitians were permanently displaced from their homes. On January 12th, 2010 a 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, rendering over 222,000 citizens dead and over 1.3 million homeless.³⁶ Because of the lack of infrastructure equipped to deal with a natural catastrophe in addition to poor construction, the earthquake caused an extraordinary amount of structural and human damage.³⁷ Even after one year, over 500,00 people were still without homes or in temporary housing, and many lack access to basic resources. Lack of resources, decreased quality of life, and increasing unemployment caused an increase in Haitian emigration.³⁸ For conservatives, this

³⁴ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ Francois Pierre-Louis, “Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti,” *Journal of Black Studies* 42 (2011): 187.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁸ Natalia Riveros, *Informe sobre la Cuestión de la Migración Internacional en la República Dominicana para el año 2011*, (Dominican Republic: El Observatorio Migrantes del Caribe, 2012), 28.

surge has reignited fears of Haitian invasion and has been used strategically in the media to further anti-Haitian sentiments.

Major human rights issues have been raised concerning the migration, employment, and exploitation of undocumented workers, and the only real actions taken by the Dominican state have been to continue large-scale deportations of people they believe to be Haitian.³⁹ Many Haitian immigrants living without documentation, or children of undocumented Haitians face major challenges with access to education, healthcare, housing, assistance, as well as being especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse from employers as well as sexual violence.⁴⁰ Because most Haitians in the Dominican Republic do not have documentation, it's hard to estimate accurately how many there are, but Natalia Riveros gives several estimates ranging between 10,000 and 250,000 in her 2011 report entitled, *Informe sobre la Cuestión de la Migración Internacional en la República Dominicana para el año 2011*. Additionally, number estimates from the state, newspaper articles, and other sources are ideologically motivated, those who posit Haiti as an invading threat cite higher numbers of immigrants to back up their claims. Also, it depends if Dominican-born Haitians are included, who have varying levels of cultural assimilation but most do not have papers.

It is also important to distinguish between different groups of Haitian migrants, as they are in no way a homogenous group. There is a small documented population of Haitians, mostly in Santo Domingo and other major urban areas, a large population of undocumented laborers that are in the Dominican Republic permanently, temporarily, or seasonally, and a growing population of Haitian-Dominicans (Dominico-Haitianos in Spanish) who were born in the

³⁹ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

Dominican Republic from Haitian parents but have trouble proving and obtaining Dominican citizenship.⁴¹

Haitian student migration to the Dominican Republic clearly falls within this new wave of Haitian migration, representing how the population of Haitian migrants continues to diversify and enter new spaces of Dominican society. A study by the Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes (SJRM) reports that a small, although significant Haitian university student presence began in 1989. Since then, Haitians have made up an increasingly large portion of the international student populations at universities throughout the country. Although there are no studies that document the Haitian university student population before 2009, there is certain information that is deducible. The Haitian student population has grown significantly since the early 1990s but universities have done little to react to their increased presence. The SJRM study points out that Dominican universities have failed to do anything to improve the experience for Haitian students. At none of the universities were there professors, administrators, or school officials that spoke Kreyòl or French to help students who struggle with Spanish upon arrival.⁴² However, there have been certain changes that have been initiated by Haitian students. Students have formed Haitian student organizations at many universities. There was an umbrella organization for all the Haitian university students in Santo Domingo; however, in the early 2000s this larger association dissolved and each university formed its own separate group. In 2006, through the student associations Haitian university students asked for a set of demands and a coalition of students met with President Leonel Fernández. After this meeting, he agreed to

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴² “Situación de los estudiantes haitianos en universidades de RD: perspectivas de retorno a Haití,” (working paper, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes, Área de Investigación, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 2004), 22.

decrease entry fees, reduce visa costs, and extend the length of student visas.⁴³ In 2010, following the earthquake, the public university, Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) designated one of their busses for transporting students from Santo Domingo to the border.⁴⁴

In 2011, there was a tragic case that sparked a wave of activism amongst Haitian students in the Dominican Republic. On July 12th, 2011, a 20-year-old Haitian woman, Rooldine Lindor, was murdered by two Dominican men posing to be housing agents. Rooldine had been studying information technology at the Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago (UTESA) in Santo Domingo.⁴⁵ She lived on the outskirts of Santo Domingo Este and was looking for a larger apartment to move into because her sister was coming to join her. Her assailants posed as housing agents and led her to an abandoned building where they raped and killed her after taking several hundred dollars she had for a deposit. Rooldine's assailants were tried and one received 20 years in prison while the other was sentenced to 5 years.⁴⁶ What was particularly remarkable about Rooldine Lindor's case was that it elicited a strong and unexpected response from the Haitian community in the Dominican Republic and particularly the Haitian student population. Haitian-Dominican groups, feminist groups, and student associations were all in solidarity for Rooldine Lindor and brought the case to the attention of Haitian president Michel Martelly, Dominican president Leonel Fernández, Dominican ambassador to Haiti (and author) Rubén Silié, Haitian ambassador to the Dominican Republic Fritz Cenéas and other top level state

⁴³Kiran Jayaram, "State, Market, Xenophobia: Making Haitian Educational Migrants in the Dominican Republic," in *Lives in Motion: Migration and Education in Global Perspective*, eds. Lesley Bartlett and Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7.

⁴⁴ Kiran Jayaram, personal communication.

⁴⁵ "Murderers of Rooldine Lindor Sentenced to Prison," *The Haitian Sentinel*, April 2, 2012.

⁴⁶ Carmen Matos, "Senadores haitianos vendrán a investigar asesinato de joven universitaria," *Hoy*, August 1, 2011.

leaders.⁴⁷ A group of Haitian senators traveled to the Dominican Republic to investigate the case. Rooldine Lindor's case was also recognized and garnered attention from the Haitian community in the U.S. as well as international media, and international human rights groups. There were online petitions to the Haitian and Dominican presidents and diplomats and online reactions from student activists and feminist activists who framed it as a femicide. Although Rooldine's death was a tragedy for the Haitian student community in the Dominican Republic, it was also a point of rally and an awakening for students. However, it is also important to think about why this case got attention and why Rooldine became so visible, while many women remain invisible despite the similar sexual and violent aggressions committed against them.

Currently, there is not an accurate estimate of the number of Haitian students in the Dominican Republic, estimates range from 2,000 to upwards of 20,000. However, it is estimated that Haitians make up almost 75% of the Dominican Republic's international student population and are primarily located in Santo Domingo and Santiago. It is also clear there has been a steady increase in the numbers of Haitian students enrolling in Dominican universities.⁴⁸ In addition to discrimination and antihaitianismo from law enforcement, one issue that is currently unfolding is fines and limitations on student visas. The student visa requires students to return to their home country once a month, or pay an 800-peso fine (about 20 US\$). As a typical semester or quarter at Dominican universities ranges from three to almost five months, many students do not have time to make a return home every month. Most students are already financially strapped, and the added burden of paying a fine for every month overstayed or paying transportation fees makes matters worse.

⁴⁷ Bridget Wooding, "La lucha de mujeres migrantes haitianas por la seguridad ciudadana," *Migración y Desarrollo* 10.18 (2012): 44-45.

⁴⁸ "Encuesta sobre gastos de estudiantes extranjeros en la República Dominicana," (working paper, Banco Central de la República Dominicana, Departamento Internacional, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 2012): 12.

There are other related educational struggles regarding the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic. There is a growing population of Dominican-born Haitians, usually referred to as Haitian-Dominicans or Dominico-Haitianos. Since the Dominican Republic has a *jus soli* citizenship policy, any person born on Dominican territory can claim Dominican citizenship. However, in practice the constitutional right to Dominican nationality does not hold up, especially for Haitian-Dominicans, who are routinely denied citizenship despite being born on Dominican territory.⁴⁹ Haitian-Dominicans include a wide range of people, from Haitians who have lived in the Dominican Republic for decades, to second and third generation immigrants who lack strong cultural ties to Haiti and might not even speak Kreyòl. Most lack documentation, because in order to claim citizenship based on “jus soli” the Dominican state requires a birth certificate. Lacking access to affordable, accessible medical care as undocumented migrants, many Haitians are unable to obtain birth certificates for their children. Additionally, most Dominico-Haitianos are denied birth certificates because of their parents’ undocumented status, despite the “jus solis” citizenship policy. Thus, Dominico-Haitianos live in a state of “permanent illegality”⁵⁰, as getting a cédula without a birth certificate or citizenship is impossible. In addition, the government recently passed a set of laws called the Reglamento de Migración, specifically Law 285-04, that enacts a host of anti-Haitian policies, including banning Haitian-Dominican children without proper documentation from schools.

There are several Dominican-based non-profit organizations that have resisted discriminatory policies put forth by the state and promoted better educational systems. Reconoci.do works for the citizenship and rights of Haitian-Dominicans and reports government rights abuses. El Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitiana (MUDHA) emphasizes gender and

⁴⁹ Wooding and Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted*, 14.

⁵⁰ Ferguson, *Migration in the Caribbean*, 21.

ethnicity in their organizing that focuses on the participation and rights of Haitian-Dominican and Haitian women. The Coalición Educación Digna fights for the government to spend more money on education, also recognized by yellow umbrellas spray painted with “4% educación,” they ask the Dominican government to spend 4% of their overall budget on education.

Another perspective that will deepen our understanding of the issue is to consider international student migration. Until quite recently, university students have been largely ignored across fields. They were traditionally considered a relatively marginal component of highly skilled migration, but in recent years scholars have recognized university students as an important category on their own.⁵¹ Also, the distinction between university students and primary or secondary school students is an important one, as the latter usually involves the consideration of the family unit, as families often migrate in order to grant children better educational opportunities. Johanna Waters emphasizes that a “truly critical perspective on international education needs to acknowledge the broader structural inequalities within which international mobilities take place.”⁵² I will do this by paying special attention to the privileges and disadvantages that Haitian students experience both in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. While my main goal is not, as is Waters’, to “illuminate the extent to which international education, and its associated mobilities, reproduces social (dis)advantage,”⁵³ this is an important topic to keep in mind. Waters also claims that all international students are privileged in some way and usually have the emotional and financial support of their family. It will be interesting to test this claim against my data, as the Haitian university student is not the typical international student for many reasons.

⁵¹ Johanna L. Waters, “Geographies of International Education: Mobilities and the Reproduction of Social (Dis)advantage,” *Geography Compass* 6.3 (2012): 126.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 125.

Haitian students enter the Dominican Republic in the context of “la nueva inmigración haitiana,” and the history of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. The antihaitianismo they experience is not new, rather, it is a deep-seated attitude that has been cultivated by the Dominican state and elites for decades. Haitian university students represent just one part of an emerging set of issues and struggles of Haitian migrants in the U.S. In the next chapter, I will detail their experiences as international students.

CHAPTER 2

The Migration Experience of Haitian University Students

I walked through the campus of the Universidad Dominicana Organización y Método (O&M) on a sticky, overcast day. Despite the threat of rain, students were gathered in the courtyards, studying at tables, and milling about. Snippets of conversations in fast Dominican Spanish flew by me, as students talked about the latest test or catching up with friends. But more than just rapid-fire Spanish was being thrown around the hallways and open spaces of the O&M; among the Dominican students were also Haitian students, speaking Kreyòl, talking about the latest soccer game or political news from Haiti. Haitian and Dominican students share the common space of the university, yet as I quickly found out, their experiences are drastically different. My research partner Katharina, a graduate student from Germany, and I met up with a group of Haitian students in an empty classroom, and they shared some of their experiences in the Dominican Republic. In a round table discussion, different members spoke passionately on a variety of subjects. In some instances, students spoke for others who couldn't find the right way to express their opinions in Spanish. The atmosphere was charged and energetic, as students talked about Dominican government policies that directly affected them and that they viewed as unjust. There was also a feeling of unity, as students nodded or affirmed their peers' statements. I heard many first-hand accounts of Haitian student experiences through small focus groups like the one at O&M, as well as through individual interviews.

This chapter presents my findings from ethnographic interviews with Haitian university students in Santo Domingo. I emphasize the lived experiences of Haitian students by showcasing their voices and opinions. In particular, I focus on their position as foreign students and Haitians migrants in the Dominican Republic, a country with deep historical roots of animosity towards

Haiti. In many cases, I have relied on direct quotes from students in order to preserve their individual voices and ideas. I treat the interview material in a similar manner as Kia Lilly Caldwell; “rather than viewing experience as an unmediated guide to truth, experience is used as a basis for exploring how [participants] related to dominant social discourses and practices in the formation of their subjectivities.”¹ This chapter will use Haitian university students’ responses as a basis for understanding their lived experiences, while Chapter 3 will explore their experiences with discrimination and antihaitianismo. In this chapter, I compare my findings to the three existing studies specifically regarding Haitian university students in the Dominican Republic, produced by Kiran Jayaram, Frank D’Oleo, and the Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes (SJRM), as well as other literature regarding international students.

I argue that Haitian university students come to the Dominican Republic based on the relative ease of migrating and gaining acceptance into Dominican universities; however, they remain relatively culturally isolated from Dominicans. My findings indicate that most students do not work, but rather receive financial support from their families. Additionally, most Haitian students plan on leaving the Dominican Republic upon completing undergraduate studies based on the difficult conditions of living for Haitians in the Dominican Republic. After discussing my methodology and providing a brief overview, my findings are broken into seven sections, which focus on the following topics: selection of university and major, work and financial issues, reasons for migrating to the Dominican Republic, contact with Dominicans and cultural integration, Haitian communities within the universities, and plans for after graduation.

Over the course of several weeks in the summer of 2012, Katharina and I interviewed over 30 Haitian university students in Santo Domingo. Katharina had several contacts among Haitian university students from previous visits, and they introduced us to more students who

¹ Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil*, 109.

were willing to be interviewed at Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) and Universidad Dominicana Organización y Método (O&M). I met Haitian students through participating in a weekly seminar at Centro Bonó, a local non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Haitian and Dominican-Haitian rights in the Dominican Republic, as well as offering educational and cultural exchange opportunities through classes. I conducted four individual interviews at Centro Bonó, and students there put me in contact with students at UTESA. The following chart illustrates the breakdown of individual interviews we conducted. The uneven numbers simply reflect the number of students who were present and agreed to be interviewed at each site. Additionally, I conducted two five-person focus groups and one ten-person focus group at the Universidad Dominicana de Organización y Método because we had a very large group of students. Katharina interviewed students individually and I had conversations with groups of students in order to be able to speak to everyone who showed up.

Table 2.1. Number of students interviewed at each university²

University	Affiliation	Number of individual interviews
Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD)	Public	4
Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo (UCSD)	Catholic	10
Universidad Dominicana Organización y Método (O&M)	Private	6
Universidad Nacional Evangélica (UNEV)	Evangelical	2
Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago (UTESA)	Private	3
Various technical schools such as INTEC and INFOTEC	Private	2

The interviews were semi-structured; both the interviewee and I had a list of questions that guided the interview, but I asked follow up questions and let the conversation flow naturally when possible. The interviews tackled a diverse range of topics, but centered on the students' reasons for coming to the Dominican Republic and their experiences within Dominican

² The total number of students in each table is slightly different. This is due to the semi-structured nature of my interviews. I did not ask the same exact questions to every interviewee and thus do not have data for every student for each topic.

universities. I asked straightforward and specific questions, while others were open ended and allowed students to talk about what they felt was most important or relevant.

Universities and Majors

Most of the interviews took place at the universities where Katharina and I had arranged to meet students. UASD is the only public university in Santo Domingo and has a large sprawling campus in a central location. There are many large buildings separated by long walkways, roads, and shady groves of trees. At UASD, there are frequent student protests against the administration for various issues. Student activism is most common here, as it is the only public university. Because it is public, it is the only university where Haitian students pay more than Dominican students, for whom the university is free of cost.

The Católica is more compact than UASD and was much more crowded when I visited. Smaller buildings dot the campus surrounded by trees. One student explained that each social group of students had their own informal meeting place on campus. The Haitian students have a patio with picnic tables by one of the academic buildings, while other groups, such as students from specific cities in the Dominican Republic, have their own spots elsewhere on campus. The students mentioned the importance of its Catholic affiliation, as well as its strong academic reputation as primary reasons for choosing the university. Most students I interviewed here were Diplomacy and International Studies majors; without a medical school, the Católica emphasizes the social sciences.

O&M is a little outside the central zone of Santo Domingo and is more compact than both UASD and the Católica. With a few main academic buildings grouped tightly together, there were two open-air patios with covered spaces with tables and chairs for studying. The patio was a bustling area, people going to and from class, socializing, and doing homework. While the

patio area looked newly remodeled, the buildings are basic inside. O&M's specialties are engineering and technology, majors that drew Haitian students who wanted to pursue careers in these fields. O&M is also one of the lowest cost universities in Santo Domingo, which makes it an attractive option for Haitian students who are usually living on a budget.

UNEV has two campuses, both located in urban areas of Santo Domingo that are small and compact with little outdoor space. Many students are drawn to UNEV because of its Evangelical affiliation, although according to the SJRM report, 70% of Haitians at UNEV are not Evangelical. UTESA also has two campuses, one centrally located on one of the principal avenues of Santo Domingo and a medicine school on the outskirts of the city. While the smaller, more central campus is compact and bustling, the medical school appears to be a hotel converted into a university. An empty swimming pool marks one of the main open spaces. This campus is a fifteen minute car ride from the city center, but still busy with students. UTESA has the most Haitian students in Santo Domingo, according to a report by the Banco Central de la República Dominicana, approximately 23% of Haitian students in the Dominican Republic are enrolled at UTESA in Santo Domingo.

The selection of a Dominican university is based on a few key factors. Advice from friends and family was very influential in choosing a university, not only would students hear about its reputation and organization, but also they would have advice on how to navigate the application process. The availability of majors was another factor that was taken into consideration; certain universities had specialties or very popular majors, such as the school of medicine at UTESA and engineering programs at O&M. The following chart illustrates the majors of the students I interviewed, broken down by university.

Table 2.2. Majors of students interviewed by university

University	Major	Number of students interviewed
O&M	Systems Engineering	2
	Civil Engineering	3
UASD	Medicine	3
	Architecture	1
UCSD	Business Administration	5
	Diplomacy and International Relations	3
	Physical Therapy	1
	Systems Engineering	1
UNEV	Modern Languages	1
	Business Administration	1
UTESA	Medicine	3

However, the 30 students whom I interviewed do not accurately represent the larger population of Haitian students in terms of major. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that my sample size was small, and because of the nature of how I met my participants. Most of the time, students would introduce me to their friends, who often had similar majors. The next chart is compiled from data from the Banco Central's report that studied the expenses of foreign students. They surveyed 1,500 foreign students and 1,102 of them were Haitian, so this data will more accurately reflect the majors chosen by Haitian students. Most Haitian students study Medicine, Business Administration, or Engineering and many related this to skills that would be useful in Haiti.

Table 2.3. Majors of Haitian university students in the Dominican Republic³

Major	% of students
Medicine	42.6
Business administration	11.4
Other Majors	8.5
Civil Engineering	7.1
Systems Engineering	5.6
Other Engineering Fields	5.4
Other Medical Sciences	4.9
Languages	4.2
Industrial Engineering	3.9
Business and Economic sciences	3.3
Dentistry	1.7
Political and Legal Sciences	1.3

In addition to recommendations from family members and the availability of majors, affordability was a primary reason for choosing a university. Most of the students I interviewed identified as middle class and went to lower to middle cost universities, where tuition was less than \$50 (US\$) per month, such as UASD, UCSD, UNEV, UTESA, and O&M.⁴ This is contrary to most internationally mobile students who usually have the economic resources to attend the more expensive universities of the host country.⁵ In their study of Haitian university students, SJRM also emphasized price, advice from friends and family, and majors as the three main factors affecting university choice.

Financing University Studies

The overwhelming majority of Haitian students enrolled in Dominican universities do not work; rather, their families financially support them during their studies. In my study, there were only five students who had worked; everyone else received money every month to pay for tuition, transportation, rent, utilities, and food. Eugene⁶ from the Católica emphasized that

³ Data adapted from “Encuesta sobre gastos,” 22.

⁴ “Situación de los estudiantes haitianos,” 17.

⁵ Waters, “Geographies of International Education,” 128.

⁶ All names have been changed unless otherwise noted.

families make big sacrifices to send their children to school in the Dominican Republic saying “se hace en base de mucho sacrificio, que las familias tienen que financiar los estudios aquí, y muchas de estas familias compran el dólar para mandarlo aquí, y el trabajo no cobra en dólares, sino en gourdes [Haitian currency]. Entonces es un estudio que se basa en mucho sacrificio.”⁷

This sacrifice that many families make speaks to the importance of higher education for these students and their families. Several students had family in the United States with higher incomes, which would make financing students in the Dominican Republic slightly easier, but most students received money sent from working parents in Haiti. As SJRM notes, most students and their families are from the middle class, and while, “lo que reciben los jóvenes es justo para su sobrevivencia... la situación no está fácil en Haití y que sus padres o la persona que le suministra el dinero tiene dificultades.”⁸ SJRM also mentions that students generally receive just enough money to cover the basic cost of living and at times have to make sacrifices to save money, such as forgoing Internet or transportation costs. In Frank D’Oleo’s study, he finds that the majority of Haitian students receive money monthly from family members, and the following table demonstrates how much students receive each month.

Table 2.4. Monthly amount of money received by students from family members⁹

Amount in US\$	% of students
\$100 – \$300	8.10%
\$300.01 – \$500	9.10%
\$500.01 – \$700	24.80%
\$700.01 – 1000	42.30%

Even though many students want to work in order to help finance their own education, it proves impossible for most students due to visa and residence issues and the difficulty of finding

⁷ All quotes have been maintained in their original form, including grammatical errors.

⁸ “Situación de estudiantes haitianos,” 28.

⁹ Frank D’Oleo, “Los estudiantes universitarios haitianos en la República Dominicana: racismo y complejidad de las relaciones interculturales,” in *Movimientos migratorias desde y hacia la República Dominicana*, ed. Roberto E. Liz (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Alfa y Omega, 2009), 175.

jobs in the Dominican Republic. Most students hold either a student or tourist visa, neither of which allows them to work legally. SJRM presented similar findings regarding Haitian students in the Dominican Republic, stating that scheduling conflicts and visa issues were the main obstacles for employment for students. Additionally, most students are very committed to their studies, and the extra responsibility of work presents a conflict. When asked whether he had a job in the Dominican Republic, one student responded,

No. Es muy difícil para un extranjero haitiano trabajar, muy complicado. Sobre todo la mayoría estudia medicina, imagínate, una persona que estudia medicina, trabajar. Y sobre todo hay un problema de residencia, no es la visa, sino la residencia. Aquí, si uno no tiene la residencia tú no puedes tener acceso a trabajo como estudiante. Imagínate.

Many Haitian students expressed the idea that Haitian students are more dedicated to their studies than Dominican students and tend to be more successful in the classroom once they overcome the language barrier, a topic I will explore in further detail in Chapter 4. This is partly due to the fact that most Dominican students simultaneously work and attend university, thus having less time to dedicate to studying. Additionally, based on the sacrifices that their families are making in order for them to attend university, most students are focused on succeeding academically.

There were five students out of thirty who were both working and studying. Teaching French, Kreyòl, or English at language schools and working at call centers were the two most common jobs for Haitian university students. While it is unclear how students avoid the issue of visas, it seems that businesses are willing to hire students working towards a university degree in certain cases. While it is uncommon that educational migrants work, it is very common for Haitian labor migrants to be hired without proper paperwork or visas. Kiran Jayaram had similar

findings, noting that some students made ends meet as language teachers, while others relied on fellow Haitians to share resources, lodgings, and money.¹⁰

One student who attended UNEV and took courses at Centro Bonó was exceptional in that he worked instead of receiving money from his parents. He explained that both the difficulty of finding work and his discomfort with accepting money from his parents:

El primer problema es el problema de documentación. Porque si no están documentados es muy difícil conseguir trabajo y si no tienen trabajo no pueden recibir recursos para pagar la universidad. Por ejemplo en el caso mío cuando llegué acá, con la idea de que mi papá me da el recurso de Haití para yo pagar, pero yo personalmente vi que no me conviene y tampoco no me siento conforme con esta forma... Tenía yo que buscar forma de trabajar, entonces después de ocho meses, un primo mío que vino antes tenía como ocho años, diez años mejor dicho, un sector público. De dos días semanal en un pequeño colegio para ayudar clases de inglés y francés así, ganaba como tres mil pesos semanal.

While there are students a few students who manage to find jobs and balance work and school, they are a minority. Most families make sacrifices in order to finance their children's education in the Dominican Republic, because for many, migration to the Dominican Republic for higher education is the more affordable choice, compared to private universities in the Dominican Republic.

Reasons for Studying to the Dominican Republic

Haitian students voiced a number of reasons for attending university in the Dominican Republic, most notably: political instability in Haiti, the difficulty of gaining entrance to affordable universities in Haiti, the ease of migrating and enrolling in universities in the Dominican Republic, differences in economic development, and the encouragement of friends.

Several students migrated because of political instability and lack of personal safety in Haiti. For example, one student from O&M mentioned that his family was growing more and more worried about the possibility of kidnapping, so his family sent him to the Dominican

¹⁰ Jayaram, "State, Market, Xenophobia," 16.

Republic to study. Another student from UASD named Fredson explained, “Yo vení porque allá en Haití había problemas políticas. Yo empecé allá con la Universidad, tuve que dejarlo porque la cosa estaba muy difícil, el problema de la seguridad en la época del presidente Jean Bertrand Aristide.” Only 3 out of approximately 30 students surveyed had already started their university studies in Haiti and were unable to continue due to political problems or the 2010 earthquake. The earthquake destroyed infrastructure and shut down many universities, causing many students to look elsewhere for a university education.

However, the primary reason that students identified was the difficulty of gaining entrance into low-cost, public universities in Haiti. There are four public universities in Haiti that are very low-cost, but these institutions only have capacity to educate a fraction of the students who complete high school. There are private universities that are easier to get into, but they are much more expensive and beyond most families’ budgets. Acceptance to public universities is so competitive that one student from the Universidad Nacional Evangélica, James, recalled that “a veces los estudiantes pasan como tres días haciendo fila para ver si pueden entrar para conseguir sólo la aplicación.” Additionally, many students told me that in their view, applicants who are accepted did not only qualify on the basis of their exams, but also gained entrance thanks to connections to an official authority in government or university. The majority of students mentioned the difficulty of gaining entry to a public university due to competition and corruption as a primary reason for coming to the Dominican Republic. SJRM had similar findings, reporting that only one thousand out of 20 thousand students passed the entrance exam to be considered for acceptance and out of those thousand, “sola entra un 10% aproximadamente, los otros que logran entrar lo hacen porque tienen algún contacto a lo interno de la universidad.”¹¹ Other research regarding international students notes that this is a common reason for going abroad for higher

¹¹ “Situación de los estudiantes haitianos,” 13.

education, “with the internationalization of education... privileged individuals were able to ‘opt-out’ of competitive domestic education systems, in favor of ‘overseas’ alternatives.”¹²

Additionally, after the earthquake and the subsequent temporary closing of many universities, the universities that remained open were in even higher demand. In contrast, it is easy to gain admission to Dominican universities; Haitian students can enroll in the Dominican university of their choice with simply a student visa, the required paperwork, and fees.¹³ Although it may be surprising, the transportation, education, and living expenses necessary to support a student in the Dominican Republic total less than the cost of private universities in Haiti. The SJRM study states that “el costo de las universidades privadas es insostenible para las familias haitianas, especialmente de clase media.”¹⁴ In this regard, Haitian university students are rather exceptional among international students. Johanna L. Waters states that “internationally mobile students are invariably privileged” and “already rich in social, cultural, and economic capital,” which she argues reproduces students’ already privileged status.¹⁵ While Haitian students studying in the Dominican Republic are undoubtedly more privileged than Haitian labor migrants in the Dominican Republic, for many students one of the main causes of migration is access to a more affordable university. While wealthier families may be able to send their children to expensive Haitian private universities, many middle class families opt for the more affordable option of education in the Dominican Republic. Thus Waters’ theory is only true to a certain extent in the case of Haitian students. While it may reinforce social advantages that middle class families enjoy over the working class, many Haitian students migrate to avoid the high cost of private universities in Haiti because public universities are nearly impossible to gain

¹² Waters, “Geographies of International Education,” 124.

¹³ Jayaram, “State, Market, Xenophobia,” 6.

¹⁴ “Situación de los estudiantes haitianos,” 14.

¹⁵ Waters, “Geographies of International Education,” 128.

entrance to. Similarly, Waters worked upon an assumption that does not hold completely true for most Haitian students: internationally mobile students are “financially secure, have the support (emotional and material) of family and friends,” “have highly educated parents, and have experienced overseas travel as a child.”¹⁶

More generally, many students characterized Haiti as incapable of offering students many education or labor opportunities as a reason for studying in the Dominican Republic. James explained that, “yo no me interesaba como era el país, viendo cómo el país no me ofrecía oportunidades de progresar de echarme adelante.” Students looking for upward social mobility saw that Haiti offered few opportunities for progress. Fredson, the UASD student, expressed gratitude for the fact that he was in the Dominican Republic and presented an interesting idea relating making sacrifices and achieving success:

Me siento muy protegido, con respeto a las oportunidades. En que allá, las oportunidades son menos. Quizás, eso tiene un precio, tiene un sacrificio. Pero mientras tú hagas el sacrificio aquí, o tú lo haces allá, hay más posibilidades de llevar un buen resultado con tus sacrificios aquí que allá. Siempre, porque es un país con muy pocos recursos, con muy, muy pocos infraestructuras que favorecen de la juventud que ir al avance. Aquí no es un país grande, pero hay más o menos cosas que te favorecen mucho más.

These two students emphasized that Haiti did not offer them many opportunities because of lack of resources and infrastructure, whereas the Dominican Republic facilitated opportunities to “ir al avance.” A language of development and progress was present throughout most of the interviews; in general, students found it favorable to study in a more developed country because they thought that more opportunities would be available to them. In a similar vein, two students discussed the international perception of Haitian universities and expressed that receiving a degree elsewhere would be advantageous for finding a job later on. An O&M student claimed that, “la universidad de Haití no reconoce en el mundo universal” but after completing a degree

¹⁶ Ibid.

at a Dominican university “tú puedes viajar a Nueva York, Canadá, tú puedes trabajar, pero es un problema de la universidad de Haití.” Students perceive Dominican universities to be more prestigious and more widely recognized on an international level, because they are based in a country that is more modernized than Haiti. Although many students do end up in the U.S., Canada, and other Western countries, it may not be specifically because of their degree from a Dominican university, rather that they have a university degree, have learned another language, and have been exposed to traveling and international perspectives. Another student from the Católica expressed similar views, put in terms of the labor market and increased opportunities upon returning to Haiti:

Primero, lo que pasa en el mercado laboral, en el mercado laboral hay una diferencia enorme entre el diploma recibido en Haití y el diploma recibido en tierras extranjeras. Cuando tú regresas, es decir que los mejores empleos, se le van a pertenecer. O sea que van a tener más oportunidades de trabajo y la sociedad en si misma va a tener otro idea de ése.

Not only are Haitian universities extremely difficult to gain access to, but also several students think that it is more favorable to study abroad because of better reputations and increased education and professional opportunities. Upon return to Haiti, a foreign degree may be regarded with more prestige than a degree from a Haitian university, in addition to language skills and exposure to more developed countries.

Just as some students commented on the differences in development between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, some students admitted they would have rather gone to Canada, the U.S., or a European country instead of the Dominican Republic. They expressed a desire to have gone to “otro país más desarrollado” for the perceived higher quality of education and student life, but that the ease and low cost of going to the Dominican Republic made it the most logical and feasible option. Joseph is an UTESA student and also attends courses at Centro

Bonó. He explains his desire to study in another country because of better technology available elsewhere to study medicine:

Yo quería estudiar en otro país más desarrollado, ya mencioné por el conocimiento, eso no cabe duda. La educación de los Estados Unidos, de Alemania, de Francia no es igual a la de la República Dominicana ni de la de Haití. Porque la tecnología allá, eso favorece la dinámica.

Despite the attractions of studying in other countries, the higher cost and the difficulty of getting a visa prohibits many students from doing so. It is much easier and less expensive to take a bus across the border to the Dominican Republic than it is to fly to the United States, France, or Canada, top destinations abroad for both family members and wealthier students. Similarly, the process for applying for a student visa in a North American or European country is much more complicated and lengthy than the process in the Dominican Republic, where students with an acceptance letter from a Dominican university may simply buy a student visa.

Students also migrate based on the encouragement and support of friends and family already established in the Dominican Republic. Through word of mouth, Haitians hear about university programs in the Dominican Republic and follow the advice of friends or family in picking a university or city. Many students come to the Dominican Republic to live with siblings, cousins, and aunts and uncles who have already established themselves studying or working. Sharing living costs with relatives reduces expenses and facilitates the transition of moving in a foreign country.

One student Eugene gives succinct explanation of why he came to the Dominican Republic that serves as a good summary of the main reasons that Haitians decide to migrate to the Dominican Republic for higher education:

Primero por asuntos socioeconómicos, en el sentido de que allá en Haití no hay la facilidad estudiar la carrera que una gusta. Y también por asuntos políticos porque

cuando yo terminé ya había desorden en Haití y ambiente estaba mal, por eso yo entré aquí porque es más económico. Porque ir a otro país me saldría un poquito más caro.

His response also showcases how a combination of factors in the Dominican Republic and Haiti make it a logical choice for many people. The Dominican Republic offers relatively inexpensive and easy access to education that is also geographically convenient. It also offers a more stable political environment and increased personal safety than Haiti.

Contact with Dominican Students

At most universities, Haitian students form tight-knit communities and remain relatively socially isolated from most Dominican students. Most students have few Dominican close friends. Additionally, Haitian students perceive Dominican students to be more comfortable, socially as well as economically.

Most of the students I met did not have Dominican friends, although they said they interacted with Dominicans in a friendly way in classes. When asked if he had many Dominican “amigos” at UTESA, Joseph answered “Sí, tengo mucho, o sea, no voy a decir amigos, porque para mí ese término es muy profundo. Puedo decir compañero. Porque estudiamos juntos, sin problemas, muchos sí. Discriminación, a veces hay discriminación, a veces no.” This student distinguished between the term “amigo” and “compañero,” recognizing that while he wasn’t close enough with any Dominicans to regard them as close friends, he had many friendly relationships. He also touches on the issue of discrimination, which was a common reason that Haitians voiced for not having Dominican friends. Most students held a similar viewpoint that they didn’t have close Dominican friends, but collaborated frequently with Dominicans within the university setting. A few students seemed to have stronger relationships with Dominicans than others; one architecture student mentioned that in his program there were no other Haitians, so he had forged more friendships with Dominicans than most Haitians. Similarly, a student who

had such a good command of Spanish that he was frequently mistaken for a Dominican had a number of close Dominican friends. Even though there are few students who have close relationships with Dominicans at universities, their relationships inside the universities are generally better than relationships with Dominicans outside the university.¹⁷ Jayaram's findings are similar to my own in that most students had a tendency to group together in order to avoid discrimination or stigma that might stem from interactions with Dominicans.¹⁸

Haitians' perceptions of Dominicans reflected their situation as foreign students in an unfamiliar, potentially hostile country where they were still finding their place. In comparing Haitian students and Dominican students, Haitians frequently pointed to the fact that Dominicans were in their comfort zone in terms of location and language. Eugene, for instance, pointed out that "hay una gran diferencia porque están en su país, se sienten bien, cómodo, estudiando en su idioma, están en su país." Many students emphasized the idea of being in one's own country, a familiar place where they had an established support network of friends and family. Among other international students, it has been frequently emphasized that they deal with a host of other obstacles that domestic students do not, namely culture shock, homesickness, higher levels of stress, and greater pressure from their families to succeed.¹⁹

Students also made economic distinctions between Haitian and Dominican students. Firstly, one student emphasized the difference in conditions in the Dominican Republic and Haiti stating, "Hay diferencias económicas, tú sabes si vives aquí, tú vives en un país desarrollado, aquí te dan más, no es lo mismo. Y además la educación de Haití no es lo mismo, hay estudiantes que vienen acá que no saben manejar la computadora." This student highlighted the different

¹⁷ "Situación de los estudiantes haitianos," 22.

¹⁸ Jayaram, "State, Market, Xenophobia," 20.

¹⁹ Gang Li, Wei Chen, and Jing-Lin Duanmu, "Determinants of International Students' Academic Performance: A Comparison Between Chinese and Other International Students," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 14 (2010): 393.

backgrounds that students come from based on their nationality and access to technology. They emphasized that the Dominican Republic is a more developed country, even though some students expressed the idea that compared to North American and European countries the Dominican Republic is not very advanced. Although Haitian and Dominican students pay the same amount in tuition fees, with the exception of the public university UASD, Dominican students have much more established support networks than Haitian students. While most Dominican students have their family to help support them financially or live with them, Haitians only have a money transfer from their parents every month or so to pay for all their expenses. Haitian students live on a tighter budget than most Dominican students and their position is less stable, as explains a student from la Católica:

Es decir hay que gastar bastante plata para poder hacer su licenciatura porque sale más caro que el estudiante dominicano que ya es de su, está en su territorio, tiene todas las condiciones. La relación con el estado que es diferente del estudiante haitiano, porque siempre tiene que pagar todo, si viene a un país donde no tiene familia, nadie. Entonces tiene que pagar todo para financiarlo.

Dominican students enjoy more financial stability, in addition to being surrounded by friends and family who have been present for many years. Haitians must pay for all expenses, and many families to struggle to pay for tuition, in addition to visa fees and related fines.

Directly in relation to university studies, Haitians generally thought that Dominicans cared less about grades and studying than they did. A student association leader at UTESA thought “los dominicanos se dedican más al placer, y nosotros los haitianos nos dedicamos más al placer, pero más a los estudios.” As I mentioned before, this is partly because most Haitian students do not have jobs and have all of their free time to study, in addition to respecting the sacrifices their families make for them to study abroad. After overcoming the initial language barrier, Haitians also have a reputation for being good students. A group of students at O&M

attributed this to the difficult and more rigorous elementary and secondary schooling in Haiti. It is much harder to make it through elementary school and graduate from high school in Haiti than the Dominican Republic, so the Haitian students who have completed high school have had to work much harder to get through school and into a university than their Dominican counterparts. These ideas reflect findings regarding Chinese students in Western countries, who generally perform well academically, despite having to overcome significant obstacles such as language, culture shock, isolation, or homesickness. Comparable to Haitian students, Chinese students succeed in part because of rigorous primary and secondary schooling in addition to pressure from family.²⁰

Generally, Haitian students are not integrated into either the larger Dominican society or the Dominican student body. They tend not to assimilate to Dominican culture in major ways. One student described the interactions between Dominican and Haitian students by saying “puede ver que hay una mezcla, a veces, pero la mayoría, cuando hay un momento de recreación, momento de pausa, puede ver que hay grupitos, es así, estudiantes haitianos, aparte hablando.” This lack of integration is partly because most students come to study at the university, not to establish themselves in the Dominican Republic. A student at O&M explained that while he didn’t like living in Santo Domingo, “pero sólo voy a pasar los cinco años para estudiar ingeniería civil y después volver en mi casa para ayudar a mi pueblo para desarrollar mi país.” This is a common attitude among many students who find it difficult to live in the Dominican Republic because of their marginalized, racialized immigrant status. Many students have an attitude of putting their head down, getting through their studies by seeking support from fellow Haitian students and building a strong internal community. However, there are students who seek more than just a university degree and take interest in cultural exchange. A UASD student

²⁰ Ibid.

Wilfred explained, “yo vine aquí no solamente para conseguir una diploma, sino para aprender de la cultura y de todo que es la cultura dominicana.”

I saw the furthest extent of cultural assimilation from Roberto, who lived in the Dominican Republic for several years as a child and had such a good grasp of Spanish, that people confused him for being Dominican. Roberto is exceptional in more than just his language abilities; he also was one of the only students who described adopting Dominican customs.

Roberto explained,

He aquerido algo de la cultura dominicana, como tener mi cervecita en los fines de semana, compartir con amigos, comer mi mangú allí. Si, la comida, arroz con habichuelas. Pero todavía me hace falta el chenchén, verdad? ... Sí, yo bailo mi dembow normal, mi bachata, mi reggaetón.

Roberto points to food and music as avenues into Dominican culture that he has adopted as part of his everyday life. However, Roberto is not the typical Haitian student, in Chapter 4 I explore how his language skills greatly affect his experience in the Dominican Republic.

Haitian Communities in Dominican Universities

Because of the relative isolation of Haitian students within universities, there is a tight-knit community of Haitians at each university that has a substantial Haitian student population. Additionally, there are also official student associations at many universities. There used to be an umbrella organization for all of the Haitian students in Santo Domingo but this larger organization disbanded a few years ago. Now many universities have their own Haitian student associations, which offer a range of services and support. In general, the associations organize cultural events, such as parties, soccer games, and events celebrating Haitian holidays. One student leader at UTESA described that the goal of their association was “para ayudar a los estudiantes a no olvidar su cultura.” In addition to reinforcing cultural ties to Haiti, associations serve as built-in support groups for new Haitian students who use the members of the association

to get oriented and learn the ropes of the university. Haitian student associations assist new students who do not speak Spanish well to do paperwork at the university and immigration offices. The student associations also often support students with visa issues or accompany students to the immigration offices.

After the earthquake in 2010, the student associations proved particularly important, as some students' families were unable to keep financing their education in the Dominican Republic. The associations at the Católica and UASD lent money to students who were affected by the earthquake so that they could pay the rest of their fees in order to graduate.

Currently, there is no official student association at the Católica, but there is a strong sense of community among Haitian students. In addition to the patio on campus where Haitian students usually hang out, Eugene told me about La Comisión de Visa Estudiantil para Haitianos en la Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo, a formal group that he used to be part of that assisted students with visas and helped students after the earthquake. There are Haitian student associations at UTESA and UASD that are formally recognized by each university. While there is a student association at UNEV, the student I talked to was neither very involved nor did he notice the association's presence on campus. The situation at O&M was similar to the Católica in the sense that the Haitian community had a strong presence on campus, but at O&M there is a recognized student association that facilitates visas and elects their leadership via elections. However, the association does not receive any funding from the university.

At UTESA, the Haitian student association has a small office on the main campus in the center of Santo Domingo. While the association's leaders attend the school of medicine across the city, the space is important as it reflects the school's recognition of Haitian students. Notably, UTESA has the highest numbers of Haitian students enrolled. The student association at UASD

is unique in that it engages with bateyes and poor Haitian neighborhoods in the surrounding area to donate clothing and medicine and to build relationships with residents. Wilfred explained that they do this because the other Haitians “son compañeros, y son familia, y son compatriotas. Es nuestro deber en la medida que podamos para ayudar a estas personas.” Haitian students expressed concern for both Haitian labor migrants in the Dominican Republic as well as for the conditions of poverty in Haiti.

Haitian student associations provide structure to already tight-knit communities, however, on campuses without formal associations, the community supports its members in similar ways. In recent years, it is important that more and more Haitian student associations have gained recognition and dedicated physical space on campus. These advances represent not only the strong Haitian communities at each university, but also the universities’ recognition of Haitian students and their willingness to work with them. Within the larger context of Dominican society, where many opportunities are closed off for Haitians, the fact that the universities recognize and in some cases support Haitian students is a significant step forward.

Male students in particular spend their free time at the university and are more involved in the Haitian student communities. This is partially because most students live in the outskirts of Santo Domingo, relatively far away from the universities, but many choose to spend extra time on the university campus in order to catch up with friends and meet other Haitian students. Many male students told me that when they hang out with friends at the university, they talk about three things: “el futbol, la política, y las mujeres.” They explained that this stereotype facilitated friendships among Haitian men, as conversation topics were already established, even for strangers.

One topic that is particularly absent in my own study is women's experiences and their participation in student associations and within the Haitian communities at universities. During my visits to universities throughout Santo Domingo, there were far fewer female Haitian students than male, and rarely were women present in large gatherings of Haitian students on campus. Haitian women were also more hesitant to be interviewed, so my data comes from mostly male Haitian students. Additionally, D'Oleo's data reports that in 2008, approximately 60% of Haitian students were male and 40% were female.²¹ I asked a Católica student about her experiences and why she thought that Haitian women were less visible, and she responded with a few insightful ideas. First, she claimed that more Haitian women had jobs in the Dominican Republic than men. Gina explained that she and her female friends worked at call centers while studying and didn't have as much time to spend at the university. It is unclear whether women received less financial support from their families than men, since I only talked to a few women students. Furthermore, she explained that while the men ate in the streets and hung around the university all day, the women would go to class, do their work, and go home, instead of lingering around the university. Finally, Gina explained that the frequent conversation topics of male Haitian students, "el fútbol, la política y las mujeres" were neither very interesting nor inviting for Haitian women. She framed it more as a matter of personal choice and preference as how to spend one's time than an issue of safety or independence. Another Católica student explained that while women were not usually present on campus, they attended many of the parties and cultural events thrown by student groups.

²¹ D'Oleo, "Los estudiantes universitarios haitianos," 171.

Future Plans

I usually closed my interviews by asking students what they planned to do after graduation. The great majority of students had plans to leave the Dominican Republic and many wanted to pursue postgraduate studies. The following table summarizes the most popular plans.

Table 2.5. Plans for after finishing university studies

Plans	Number of students
Graduate studies in another country and then return to Haiti	15
Return to Haiti to start business or help with family business	8
Study or work in another country	3
Stay in the Dominican Republic	2

Most students wanted to leave the Dominican Republic after finishing their studies because they did not feel comfortable in the Dominican Republic based on discrimination, job prospects, and their immigrant status. Additionally, many students admitted that they had never planned on staying in the Dominican Republic long-term. Jean-Paul from the Católica expressed this idea when he explained, “the reason why I came was because I wanted to learn new things and go back to my country. To bring things I learned from other countries. Just come for five years, study, and that’s it.” Jean-Paul and many other students had the idea of living in the Dominican Republic only as long as it took to get a university degree, and then promptly returning to Haiti. Some students were so adamant as to claim that they would leave directly after graduating. Many wanted to continue their higher education in another country other than the Dominican Republic or Haiti. The majority of students wanted to return to Haiti eventually because of a strong desire to rebuild and help their country. However, Fredner Gay, a graduate student at the Católica, explained that students rarely ended up back in Haiti after graduation. He explained that many students went abroad again for a master’s or PhD education, yet once they were settled in the U.S., Canada, France, or another European country, it was hard for them to leave. If they returned to Haiti, they would earn much less and live in even higher insecurity; an international

education and more money also would mean becoming a bigger target for crime in Haiti. One student expressed Fredner's theory, explaining first that he was not going to live in the Dominican Republic because for Haitians "no hay vida... tengo que buscar vida en otra parte del mundo." When I asked him if he was going to return to Haiti, he responded,

Ja, ahora en Haití, no. En otra parte como Estados Unidos o Canadá. Eso son los países. Haití, no hay seguridad en Haití, uno puede matar a uno, y entonces un ingeniero como yo, que va a trabajar en Haití y cuanto voy a ganar? Como ochocientos dólares, eso no es nada. Yo puedo ganar más. Por eso no, no hay cuarto en Haití, pa' mí. Por eso quiero otros países.

Even though many students hope to return to Haiti, there are many factors that influence them to stay in other countries besides the Dominican Republic. However, some students seemed very committed to returning to Haiti to improve their home country. I asked a UTESA medical student why he wanted to go back to Haiti, and he explained that "esto es para prestarle ayuda a mis compañeros, mis compatriotas que me necesitan. Allá en Haití faltan médicos y como voy a ser médico, voy a ayudarles en el aspecto de la salud." Some students, especially medical students and engineering students saw that their majors directly prepared them to contribute to Haiti's development – either through improving the healthcare system or designing infrastructure.

The desire to leave the Dominican Republic reflects the difficulty of living there as a Haitian. In the next chapter, I explore the challenges students face from dealing with antihaitianismo and discrimination.

CHAPTER 3

Student Perspectives on Antihaitianismo, Discrimination, and Ethno-Racial Identity

Cuando uno va afuera, siempre uno no va a sentirse tan bien. Sobre todo en un país como la Republica Dominicana donde nosotros tenemos una historia, una herida histórica que todavía no es cerrada. Y digamos que uno estudia, pero no es el ambiente donde uno le gusta estudiar. En el sentido de que a veces, por ejemplo en las guaguas yendo a su casa, a veces se encuentra algunas reacciones, digamos, discriminación, por parte de algunas personas. Cosas que suceden en todos países porque hay mucha categoría de personas aquí, y eso se debe a muchos factores, pero como uno no viene para quedarse aquí, uno sigue estudiando para ir a otros país, estudiar más y luego volver a Haití.

-Eugene

Eugene expresses an alternative, unique perspective on antihaitianismo, one that is rarely heard in the Dominican Republic. Antihaitianismo is a dominant state-sponsored ideology that has shaped Dominican national identity, international relations on the island, as well as the experiences of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. Although there are extensive works outlining the domestic effects of antihaitianismo on Dominicans' self identity and their conceptualizations of race, such as *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* and *Coloring the Nation*, the experiences and identity formation of Haitians on the receiving end of antihaitianismo are rarely discussed. In this chapter I will explore Haitian students' experiences of being othered and discriminated against, which offer new perspectives on antihaitianismo in the Dominican Republic. Just as Kia Lilly Caldwell's analysis seeks to understand how gender and race in Brazil are lived rather than constructed by dominant discourses, this chapter explores how Haitian identity in the Dominican Republic is lived rather than how it is constructed by antihaitianismo.¹ Eugene's reflection demonstrates that university students have a unique vantage point regarding discrimination and Haitian-Dominican relations, especially given his academic training in diplomacy and international relations. As a result, Eugene recognizes the

¹ Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil*, 14.

two nations' complicated past, describing it poignantly as a "historic wound that has not yet healed"² before switching to a local, personal experience with discrimination. Eugene and other Haitian students have lived in Haiti and the Dominican Republic for extended periods of time and are also able to articulate complex and subtle differences between the two countries. Additionally, Haitian students are at the forefront of the expanding spaces and social roles that Haitians occupy in the Dominican Republic by accessing spaces in Dominican society that have traditionally been closed off to Haitians. Haitian university students confront and debunk traditional Dominican stereotypes of Haitians and reveal how Dominicans react to the changing face of Haitian migration.

I asked university students about discrimination through open-ended questions, ranging from simply "how do you feel living in the Dominican Republic?" to more specific questions such as "do you think Dominican and Haitian students receive equal treatment in the university?" I received a wide range of responses, as students interpreted my questions in different ways based on diverse experiences. Haitian students noted two types of discrimination: individual racism and institutional racism. Individual racism consisted of specific encounters in which teachers, Dominican peers, or Dominicans in public spaces mistreated or talked negatively about Haitians. On the other hand, reports of institutional racism included the difficulty of complying with the Dominican Republic's unreasonable visa policies, the difficulties of working legally, and encounters with law enforcement. In general, most students noted less discrimination within the university setting than in the larger Dominican society. This finding is consistent with other studies of international students. In her study of international students at University of California, Los Angeles, Shideh Hanassab emphasized that "the academic and university settings are much

² All translations are my own.

more open to international students than the Los Angeles community outside.”³ However, students at all institutions in Santo Domingo encountered or knew of a few particularly discriminatory teachers, but institutional racism does not appear to be widespread within universities. Similarly, although most Haitians did not have very many Dominican close friends, the classroom setting provided a unique space where Haitians and Dominicans were clearly equal peers. However, outside the university, students experience much more discrimination and felt a general lack of respect in public places. Students’ responses to this lack of respect ranged from frustration to increased feelings of Haitian pride to indifference, as they recognized that they had little time left in the Dominican Republic. Some students chose to focus on state-level, institutional discrimination by discussing visa issues, fines, interactions with police and immigration officials. Students also compared the discrimination they experienced to discrimination faced by Haitian labor migrants in the Dominican Republic and, less commonly, to Haitian migrant experiences in the U.S.

These experiences reveal insights about both identity formation among Haitians in the Dominican Republic and the nature of antihaitianismo. Haitian students maintain a strong pride in their national identity that is rooted in an ethno-racial identity despite the discrimination they face based on their Haitian identities. Additionally, students face discrimination despite their higher social status as students who are wealthier than Haitian labor migrants and pay for university costs. Many students are surprised by the treatment, as they expect Dominicans to discern between the different social statuses of educational and labor migrants. This indicates the class differences that Haitian students are aware of among Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic.

³ Shideh Hanassab, “Diversity, International Students, and Perceived Discrimination: Implications for Educators and Counselors,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10 (2006): 165.

I will introduce seven Haitian students and use their responses to address the topics above. I selected the following students because they spoke in the most depth about their experiences with discrimination; furthermore, their responses present a diverse array of strategies to deal with discrimination as well as distinct reactions to antihaitianismo. Rather than view these interviews as an “unmediated guide to the truth,” I follow Caldwell’s methodology by considering their experiences as context for exploring how Haitian students relate to and respond to antihaitianismo.⁴ While these seven students certainly are not representative of the larger Haitian student population in the Dominican Republic, the diversity of their responses provokes a nuanced consideration of antihaitianismo from several distinct points of view.

Joseph

Joseph is a medical student at UTESA and has been in the Dominican Republic for five years. He has two years left to complete his medical degree and plans to return to Haiti to help strengthen the healthcare system. I met him at Centro Bonó, in a weekly course called “Diplomado de Interculturalidad” that I participated in during my stay in Santo Domingo. This course tackled topics such as racism, xenophobia, and the history of Hispaniola, while promoting cultural exchanges between Dominicans and Haitians. Joseph enrolled in the course out of interest, along with a friend. I am grateful to Joseph not only because he took the time to do an interview with me, but also because he introduced me to the president and vice-president of the UTESA Haitian university student association. Our interview took place one day before class at Centro Bonó.

When I asked Joseph what the most notable difference was between living in the Dominican Republic versus Haiti, he did not immediately point to the issue of discrimination. Instead he pointed more generally to what he called “choque cultural” and the fact that he does

⁴ Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil*, 109.

not feel quite at home in the Dominican Republic. However, Joseph explained that being part of the university helped to “integrarnos en la gran familia dominicana para sentirnos mejor.” In response to a question regarding equal treatment of Haitian and Dominican students within the university context, he responded:

Basando, por ejemplo los exámenes... no importa que tú eres haitiano o dominicano, pasó lo que está. Pero de una manera subjetiva... algunos puede decir que sí, me trató así, pero en la realidad... no se puede ver así. Puede tener alguna idea, sí, hay discriminación tal, tal, tal. Pero científicamente no es mostrado, porque a través de los exámenes, en las exposiciones, se mezclan, entonces es una manera de integración. Y científicamente, eso no.⁵

In considering this quote, it is important to remember that Joseph studies medicine. His scientific training is especially evident in this case, as he analyzes discrimination faced by students in a scientific way, as if it required objective or quantitative proof. In particular, Joseph points to academic exams as being an “objective” evaluation in which it doesn’t matter whether you are Haitian or Dominican, simply, “pas[a] lo que está.” Joseph restricts his reflection to institutional racism, speaking of exams that level the playing field. However, he seems to dismiss other students’ accounts of personal discrimination, calling them “subjective” and not scientifically proven.

Even though Joseph reported low levels of discrimination inside the university, he identified that his greatest challenge with living in the Dominican Republic was the lack of respect towards Haitian students from the government. Touching on a very different topic than personal interactions with professors and Dominican peers, he explained his frustration with the Dominican government’s policy towards Haitian university students:

El desafío más grande es el respeto a los estudiantes. Un estudiante no es cualquiera persona que viene para trabajar o hacer cualquier cosa. Un estudiante es una persona que

⁵ I have conserved the original wording of the interviews, including grammatical errors, except for certain cases where I removed repetitions that took away from the overall clarity of the quote.

viene para prepararse. Para hacer un inferencia, es una persona que un país debe de respetar. Entonces, los estudiantes, a veces los maltrataron. Por ejemplo la policía... nos exigieron andar con pasaporte, con visa, pero aquí el estado está encargado de darnos visa. Algunas veces la pasaporte está en la cancillería, entonces solamente tenemos el carnet de estudiante.... Me imagino que eso es injusto. Eso es por falta de respeto a nosotros.

Joseph's analysis of this problem is interesting for two reasons: firstly, he focuses on institutional racism, and secondly, he distinguishes between educational and labor migrants. Rather than mentioning specific encounters with individuals, he limits his discussion of discrimination to interactions with police and government policies regarding identification. Unlike other students who mention confronting racism in more personal forms, Joseph strictly mentions discrimination from the state.

He also begins to differentiate between student migrants and other types of migrants by emphasizing that students come with the specific purpose to study or "prepare themselves," which from his perspective entitles students to different treatment than lower class labor migrants. Joseph continues this differentiation by expressing his view that "tenemos derecho de estudiar donde queremos, tenemos que ser legal, estamos legal, somos legal. Entonces el gobierno debe exigir nuestra residencia, como estudiantes, porque no somos vagos o no somos vagabundos o personas sin destino." Joseph's responses express his frustration and feelings of injustice at the treatment Haitian students receive from the government. Joseph seems to base the differentiation between educational and labor migrants on a contractual relationship between foreign students and the Dominican government. From his perspective, the fact that they are students who have entered the country legally, with the specific goal of studying merits them different and better treatment than the "vagos" and "vagabundos." These strong words, along with "personas sin destino" also reflect traditional Dominican stereotypes of Haitians. Although

Joseph does not state it blatantly, his comments imply a negative view of lower class labor migrants.

When asked to clarify the differences between Haitian labor migrants and Haitian educational migrants, Joseph simply recognized the fact that especially for the government “el estudiante y los que no son estudiantes están en el mismo lugar, no hay diferencia.” This drives home the fact that Joseph sees the government as failing in upholding its part of the contractual relationship; Haitian students are documented, participate in the economy, and have come with the specific goal of studying yet they receive the same treatment as the lower class workers. Joseph appears to feel entitled to more respect from the government because of his higher social status as a student. In a study of international students in England, participants expressed similar views of disbelief that they received the same treatment as “unwanted” immigrants, despite contributing to the economy. Author Lorraine Brown interpreted that “by distinguishing themselves from unwanted immigrants, they could assert their superiority over those sojourners whose contribution to British society was felt to be questionable and they could reaffirm their right to be in the United Kingdom.”⁶ The students in Brown’s study conceptualized a similar contractual relationship between educational migrants and the state that was not being upheld by the host country.

In part, Joseph attributes the institutional discrimination to the lack of development in the Dominican Republic compared to nations such as the U.S. or France. Previously, he mentioned that he would rather have studied in a more developed country to take advantage of better resources and technology for studying medicine. He directly links development and

⁶ Lorraine Brown, “A Failure of Communication on the Cross-Cultural Campus,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13 (2009): 450-451.

discrimination, stating rather hopefully that the treatment students receive from the government, “sería imposible en cualquier país desarrollado que tiene respeto por sus hermanos.”

Joseph introduces several important topics that are present throughout all seven students highlighted in this chapter, as well as throughout the other interviews I conducted. His limiting discrimination to institutional and state level discrimination was rather unique among Haitians, as most students alluded to more personal encounters with discrimination and racism. While many other students also recognized that Haitian students and Haitian labor migrants were treated similarly by the state, students related to and differentiated themselves from Haitian labor migrants in a variety of ways. Many, like Joseph, were surprised and frustrated that being a student did not make much of a difference when it came to discrimination from the state or contexts outside the university. For Joseph, antihaitianismo revolved around the “falta de respeto” in the context of a contractual relationship between educational migrants and the government.

Jonasen

Jonasen is a student at the Católica and has been in the Dominican Republic for six years. Since childhood he was interested in history and international politics thanks to his penchant for watching international news, and subsequently, majored in Diplomacy and International Studies. Jonasen, more than any other student I interviewed, spoke most strongly about proudly self-identifying as Haitian and maintaining a Haitian identity while in the Dominican Republic despite his experience with frequent discrimination. This national and cultural pride was rooted in a radical interpretation of Haitian history.

Jonasen acknowledged that there were certain “profesores racistas” explaining that the “profesores racistas...no son todo, por ejemplo en mi carrera, no sufro eso. O sea cuestión de

racismo, todavía no. No sé si voy a sufrirlo, pero otros sí sufren. Puede ser, se manifiesta lento, pero a mí personalmente no.” Jonasen denies experiencing antihaitianismo but still acknowledges that it is a very negative experience, choosing the verb “sufrir,” to suffer, to describe dealing with discrimination. When asked directly about experiencing discrimination, many students answered in a similar manner, explaining that they had seen their friends struggle with discrimination, but they had not experienced it directly themselves. It is hard to tell whether it is true that most of my participants had witnessed but not personally experienced discrimination, or whether students did not want to talk about personal instances of antihaitianismo. The fact that many students were evasive about directly answering questions about experiences of discrimination makes sense because for most interviewees, I was a complete stranger. In a study of international students in England, researcher Lorraine Brown noted a similar pattern, although she attributed it to a different cause. Speaking specifically about Muslim students, she writes that “suspicion and apprehension were rife: even if they had not suffered racial and Islamophobic abuse directly, students were disturbed by stories of mistreatment.”⁷

When I asked Jonasen what the most pressing problem or challenge was for Haitian university students, he responded in a way that reflected his own historical consciousness and perhaps his position as a Diplomacy and International Studies major:

Muchos. Hay muchos. El primer problema es al nivel estatal-histórico. Es al nivel histórico. Desde el tiempo de Boyer, hasta ahora. Pero a veces el problema de nosotros, con ese problema hay estudiantes que no quieren identificarse como haitianos. Eso es un problema grave. Hay estudiantes que no quieren identificarse como haitianos. Siempre hablan mal de Haití, todo, eso es un problema gravísima, como un estudiante no puede, no quiere identificarse como haitiano.

⁷ Ibid., 449.

In contrast to Joseph, who answered this same question by pointing to anti-Haitian government and immigration policies, Jonassen emphasized that the most important problem is that there are students who don't want to identify as Haitian. In the context of antihaitianismo present throughout many levels of Dominican society, it makes sense that students would want to not actively define themselves as Haitian in hopes of avoiding discrimination. Evidently Jonassen has witnessed friends or fellow Haitian students avoid being identified as Haitian. The primary problem for him is that they don't *want* to identify as Haitian, as he emphasizes three times throughout this passage. The avoidance of identifying as Haitian is similar to Black denial in the Dominican Republic in the sense that individuals downplay certain identity traits in hopes of receiving better treatment or advancing their social status. However, while Dominicans privilege the Indigenous and Spanish cultural traits and biological ties within their national narrative, some Haitian students hide their nationality. Nonetheless, and in sharp contrast to Dominicans, that nationality remains based on a Black racial identity. For Haitians, downplaying their Haitian identity is a survival strategy to avoid mistreatment and is largely based in language rather than personal style choices. Attempts to pass as non-Haitian are a result of the same racist, anti-Haitian mentality that equates Blackness and Haitian nationality with lower class and lower social status.

In the previous passage, Jonassen situates the tension on the island historically by mentioning Jean-Pierre Boyer, who was president of Haiti from 1818 to 1843 and directed the Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic that lasted from 1822 to 1844. He implies that the Haitian occupation of the island was the beginning of a long history of tense relationships between the two nations of Hispaniola. In the following passage, Jonassen beautifully argues for pride in Haitian nationality, rooted in an understanding of the historical significance of the

Haitian revolution. I asked him about the students he mentioned who didn't want to identify as Haitian and he responded:

Puedo decir que es un problema personal. Por ejemplo, yo soy haitiano, a cualquier parte que yo me voy, yo voy a ser el haitiano. Aunque yo cambio mi nacionalidad, yo voy a quedarme el haitiano. Entonces, ¿por qué yo tengo que no identificarme como haitiano? Tengo que hacerlo, y tengo que sentirme feliz en hacerlo. Eso es problema personal de la persona. Uno que no quiere identificarse, es un problema para la sociedad. Es una nacionalidad. Tengo una pasaporte, tengo que sentirme feliz. Yo tengo que sentirme feliz. Y somos un pueblo magnífico. Pueblo que ha cambiado el mundo. La revolución haitiana debe ser estudiada en toda parte del mundo. Lo *cambiamos* totalmente. Entonces, ¿por qué una persona no se siente feliz que es haitiano? Pero históricamente viene con esa vaina que el haitiano es maldito, es muy malo, es un diablo, no sé, que sé yo, pero, tengo que conocer, pero eso es el problema gravísimo de esas personas. Ellos no, no quieren aprenderse. Tengo que aprender, saber mi origen, todas esas cosas, tengo que saber. Eso es el problema.

While Jonasen's eloquent explanation stands on its own, there are a few points worth highlighting. Jonasen emphasizes the phrase, "tengo que sentirme feliz" three times, driving home the importance of feeling comfortable with being Haitian, despite the discrimination that comes along with the identity, by framing it as an obligation. Next, Jonasen expands the problem of Haitians not wanting to identify as Haitians to a societal problem, not just a personal problem. While he emphasizes the personal importance of being happy in identifying as Haitian, he considers it a serious problem of society and nation. What most stands out in Jonasen's words is his intense pride in claiming Haitian identity. While he recognizes the modern negative stereotypes of Haiti, he chooses to link his Haitian identity with the Haitian revolution instead. Jonasen closes with the idea that those who don't choose to openly identify as Haitian are those who don't desire to "know themselves" or their origins, again linking Haitian pride to the understanding of Haitian history.

Eugene

Eugene, like Jonasen, studies Diplomacy and International Relations at the Católica. I met Eugene by coincidence in the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores in Santo Domingo. I was getting help from the head librarian to search for data when he introduced me to Eugene, who was working in the library on his thesis. Eugene is active in the Haitian student community at the Católica and was part of the Comisión de Visa Estudiantil para Haitianos en la Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo. Although the commission no longer exists, it was formally in charge of helping Haitians obtain their student visas, but they also organized cultural events and gave several students financial assistance after the 2010 earthquake. Eugene also participated in an immigrant activist group at Centro Bonó.

When we were first introduced to Eugene at the beginning of this chapter, he named the history of tense relations between the Dominican Republic as a “herida histórica” and explained the difficulty of feeling comfortable in another country. Eugene mentioned that the Dominican Republic was not a very good environment for studying because of the discrimination. Later on, he emphasized this same point while contemplating his plans for after graduation. He plans on going to graduate school in the Dominican Republic only if he receives a grant, but explained that beyond university studies:

Como futuro intelectual, yo no puedo vivir aquí en este país. Porque uno no tiene conciencia de algunas cosas. Es decir, por ejemplo, a veces cuando uno ha sido testigo de un acto de discriminación, un dominicano hacia otro haitiano, eso afecta a una persona, como digamos, el ciudadano haitiano.

While Eugene describes that he has experienced discrimination, he also acknowledges that seeing his peers and fellow Haitian students face discrimination also affects him. This remark is similar to Jonasen’s in the sense that they both are very aware of the discrimination that their

Haitian peers face. Eugene continues his reasoning behind not wanting to stay in the Dominican Republic as a “future intellectual”:

También yo entiendo que si yo me quedo aquí en este país, las metas que yo quiero alcanzar no las voy a poder alcanzar. Porque no hay mucha oportunidad, aquí uno podía terminar, pero no hay un, digamos, políticas de apertura para la comunidad haitiana. Entonces, también eso no es absolutamente, pero hay personas que logran ingresar en el sistema, pero la gran mayoría cuando terminan de aquí, se van a otro país o regresan allá en Haití, porque aquí no, no, no integran la comunidad estudiantil.

Eugene sees the Dominican Republic as a particularly closed off place for Haitians, especially those looking to advance their careers. While he does not specifically name discrimination as a main factor, he states that he would not be able to achieve his goal because of lack of “openings” or ways in for the Haitian community.

I asked him specifically about discrimination and how he dealt with it, and he answered:

Mi reacción siempre ha sido una reacción sensata, no se manifiesta en violencia ni en palabras sucias, no. [Se manifiesta] en estudiar más para yo posteriormente y otras personas que comparten esta conexión y allá en Haití... y así para que la gente se quede allá en Haití y no vienen aquí.

Eugene’s response to antihaitianismo and discrimination in the Dominican Republic is very different from Jonasen’s. While in Jonasen it caused a strong, outspoken pride in his Haitian nationality and culture, Eugene explains that for him, his reaction is not expressed in violence or in bad words. For him, experiencing or seeing discrimination inspires him to study harder and discourage other Haitians from coming to the Dominican Republic.

Eugene immediately continued his explanation by making a comparison between the treatment of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. He mused that although the U.S. is more developed than the Dominican Republic, Mexican and Canadian immigrants have quite different experiences in the United States. He insisted that class differences were at the heart of this problem both in the United States and the Dominican

Republic, stating that “el problema es puramente económico,” but recognized the benefits of being a country that was more stable, albeit more discriminatory. Eugene explained that “por lo menos [la República Dominicana] logr[a] una estabilidad que ha movido el país y por eso estoy aquí. Una estabilidad, donde yo puedo estudiar, cosa que no hay en Haití.” Eugene was the only student I met who compared the situation of Haitian immigration in the Dominican Republic with marginalized immigrants elsewhere. He also made the insightful argument that economic differences among migrants motivated discriminatory migration policies.

Fredson

Fredson is a student at the public university in Santo Domingo, la UASD. In 2007 he started studying medicine and he regularly participates in events and activities run by the UASD student association. After graduation Fredson plans to return to Haiti and find a way to complete a master’s degree. We first were introduced to Fredson in Chapter 2, when he talked about the different outcomes that come with making sacrifices in the Dominican Republic versus Haiti. I was introduced to Fredson and Wilfred, both students at la UASD, by a friend of Katharina, my research partner. Both UASD interviews took place during a hot afternoon in the shade of a large grove of trees in front of the library, where there is a cluster of stone benches and tables.

Fredson’s strategies of dealing with antihaitianismo and discrimination echo some of the same sentiments that Jonasen and Eugene expressed, specifically, placing discrimination in a historical context, being affected by seeing peers experience discrimination, and recognizing the difficulty of integrating into Dominican society. Overall, Fredson focused on discrimination on an individual and cultural level, rather than discriminatory policies from the state.

Fredson identified integration into Dominican culture as the most challenging part of his experience:

Para mi, el desafío más grande es incorporarse en esa cultura. Es un poco difícil porque no tenemos la misma cultura, y tu sabes que entre los dos países, hay cosas históricas que a veces dañan las relaciones, todo esto son cosas que yo digo... es un poco difícil incorporarse, que parte de la sociedad dominicana a veces rechaza una incorporación haitiana acá. Y la razón es, creo, según yo, viene siendo de cosas económicas. La cosas no son tan buenas allá, quizás vienen pa'ca, y nosotros no somos un país grande, un país rico, y eso no hay oportunidades para nosotros.

Just as Eugene characterized Dominican society as being closed off for Haitians, Fredson immediately mentioned the difficulty of “incorporating” himself into Dominican culture. Not only did he attribute this to cultural differences between the two countries, but he also historically situated the cultural tension, just as Eugene and Jonasen did. Additionally, Fredson repeats Eugene’s sentiment that the problem is largely based in the economic differences between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Fredson also mentions the feeling that Dominican society rejects Haitian migrants. By using key metaphors such as barriers, rejection, and difficulties of becoming part of the “system” in the Dominican Republic, Fredson and many other Haitian students put into words the experience of being othered and living in a society that has historically rooted negative stereotypes and beliefs associated with Haitians. Their perceptions reveal an understanding of Dominican culture, as they note substantial differences between the social and political climates of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Fredson continued his explanation with a slightly conflicted expression of his belief that incorporation into Dominican society is difficult.

Pero, creo que si uno hace un esfuerzo, tú puedes incorporarse sin problema. Pero con a veces frustraciones, si algo pasa a un compañero mío, un amigo mío, esa me afecta. No tiene que ser a mí personalmente, pero si pasa a amigo mío, claro que esto me afecta. Esa es la idea, en esa pregunta, el porcentaje de incorporarse, es mucho más difícil decir que es fácil incorporarse así. No es tan fácil.

Ultimately, Fredson concludes that it is certainly not easy to incorporate oneself into Dominican culture as a Haitian; at the same time he also presents the idea that if you really try, it is possible.

However, this tension is explained by the idea that both personally experiencing and witnessing friends and peers deal with discrimination are equally upsetting. Both Jonasen and Eugene expressed similar feelings, that they were equally concerned when they experienced discrimination as observing acts of discrimination towards peers. Fredson most clearly states this belief of feeling empathy towards fellow Haitian students, one that was common among the students I interviewed. To the extent that it also extends to Haitian workers and lower class Haitian migrants is questionable, as students had diverse ways of relating themselves to Haitian labor migrants; while some students felt entitled to different treatment based on higher status, others empathized with labor migrants as well.

After Fredson mentioned experiencing and witnessing acts of discrimination, I asked him how he reacts and deals with those situations.

A veces yo reaccione dentro de yo mismo, a veces yo trato de expresar lo que yo siento. Si creo que el momento es oportuno para eso, por ejemplo ver una discriminación uno a otro, si tú puedes aportarlo para decir que no, no puedes hacerlo así.

Fredson's reaction is very different than other students I have introduced. Fredson describes how he takes careful action by speaking up about discrimination during opportune moments. He was calm and collected when he explained this, as if he reacted in a similarly balanced way each time he witnessed acts of discrimination. It seemed like Fredson intended to be more diplomatic than confrontational, as the following passage illustrates further, starting with examples of what he would say to people about discrimination:

Quizás tenemos diferencias todos, pero hay que aceptar el otro en como está. Imagínate tú, en otra sitio, como sentirías como el otro. Son cosas psicológicas, son cosas que uno dice que tú crees que podría cambia la cosa. Yo sé que el resultado no va ahora, pero después de dos días, tres días, después de lo que tú habías dicho, quizás se cambia ellos, quizás se cambia. Las reacciones siempre lo mismo, hablar cuando pueda, decir que la cosa no funciona así, que queremos un mundo mejor, que queremos una isla mejor. Hay que tomar las discriminaciones – eso no sirve. Ya no sirve.

Fredson highlights a series of key ideas in this passage. First, he argues for accepting the “other” as they are and thinking about how it would feel to be the “other.” While this is a common idea throughout many cultures, it seems that specifically Fredson’s experience as the “other” in the Dominican Republic makes this idea even more important to him. Secondly, he explains how he verbally confronts discrimination when appropriate and views it as an investment rather than an immediate pay-off. Fredson recognizes that it is unlikely that he will immediately change anyone’s mind, but that by speaking up he might plant a seed that may lead to a change in Dominicans’ opinions of Haitians later on. He also argues against discrimination by advocating for a “mundo mayor” and an “isla mejor.” This is a way of putting the discrimination in a larger context that goes beyond the personal level and using inclusive language to convey the need for a more accepting environment that will lead to a better environment for everyone, not just Haitians.

Wilfred

Wilfred is an architecture student at la UASD and arrived in the Dominican Republic in 2008. Although he never thought he would study outside the country, the political turmoil in Haiti during the coup d’état against Jean-Bertrand Aristide affected Wilfred and his family in Gonaives, a major city in northern Haiti. After his cousin was kidnapped, he moved to the Dominican Republic for increased safety and to pursue a university degree. Wilfred also is also an active member of the UASD student association; he is also one of the few Haitian students in the architecture program. Because of this, Wilfred has more Dominican friends and interactions with Dominican peers than other Haitian students. This fact will be an important thing to keep in mind when considering his responses.

Wilfred compares the development levels of the Dominican Republic and Haiti and relates the difference directly to his quality of life in each country. In the same breath, he also expresses the common idea of feeling empathy for peers that experience discrimination.

Eso no es un secreto, por el desarrollo que tiene aquí, comparativamente a Haití, parece un poquito cómodo. Pero sobre todo, el problema que el público no se ve, hay un problema psicológica. A veces tú puedes estar en un lugar cómodo y la mente no está en eso. Por ejemplo, cuando tú escuchas que tú compañero tiene problema en un sitio, eso no es un secreto, siempre hay problemas cuando se habla del asunto haitiano y dominicano. Claro que eso nos afecta, psicológicamente.

While other students point to economic differences between the two countries to explain migration or explain discrimination, Wilfred relates the economic differences directly to himself by remarking that the lifestyle in the Dominican Republic is comfortable compared to that of Haiti. Additionally, he repeats Fredson's idea about the personal impact hearing about acts of discrimination has on his psyche. He characterizes the problem of discrimination as invisible, something that the public doesn't see clearly. Wilfred challenges this comfort that he feels in the Dominican Republic by explaining that while he may be physically more comfortable and safer in the Dominican Republic, this doesn't necessarily translate to feeling welcomed. Wilfred emphasizes that experiencing, witnessing, or hearing about acts of discrimination and tension between Haitians and Dominicans makes him uneasy in the Dominican Republic. While this empathy for other students who experience discrimination may reflect Wilfred's reluctance to share more personal stories of discrimination, it also points to a sense of unity that Wilfred feels among Haitian university students.

When I asked him specifically about the discrimination and what his reaction was, he chose not to answer the question or interpreted the question in a different way, more as how to end discrimination, or what was a possible solution to discrimination:

La verdad siempre he dicho, eso es un problema de, de Haití. Hay que empezar primero allá. Tratar de organizarnos, resolver... lo que son prioritario son los más pobres. Porque los haitianos vienen aquí, no es para molestar, sino porque no hay trabajo allá. No es para ser perezoso, no es por eso, sino porque no hay trabajo. Cuando organizamos yo creo que haya una solución.

Thus far, Wilfred has provided a set of rather unique responses to common themes, with a few exceptions. This remark exemplifies another way that Wilfred has markedly different opinions than many of his peers. Instead of mentioning antihaitianismo, the history of the island, or Dominican society as a source for discrimination against Haitians, he criticizes Haiti instead. Wilfred explains that Haiti needs to organize itself so that the state can provide work in order to stop the brain drain to the Dominican Republic. His solution focuses on preventing Haitians from coming to the Dominican Republic rather than working against antihaitianismo in the Dominican Republic. This makes sense because most students are in the Dominican Republic for a period of five to ten years, not really enough time to merit a commitment to changing the popular opinion of an entire nation. Because they are semi-permanent residents, it doesn't make sense to make an investment that will have a long-term pay-off.

Even though Wilfred discusses how hearing about acts of discrimination affects him psychologically, overall, he seems to have few problems living in Santo Domingo:

Yo no puedo decir que tengo una cosa que me molesta por vivir aquí. Porque a veces, digo... en la vida no hay ningún sitio perfecto para vivir, tú me entiendes. Y cuando uno piensa en ser profesional hay que pensar en eso también. Yo puedo decir que hay una cosita para arreglar y hay una persona que no tiene educación.... No tengo problemas por vivir aquí. Mis vecinos siempre me tratan bien.

Again, Wilfred is rather exceptional in saying that generally he doesn't have a problem with living in Santo Domingo, as most other participants mentioned the difficulty of dealing with discrimination or the government's discriminatory policies that made life difficult with visas or the police. Perhaps this is linked to the fact that he also seemed much more integrated and had

more Dominican friends than his Haitian peers, as one of the only Haitians in the architecture program.

Our conversation delved further into concepts of race and his perception of Dominican culture:

Jenny: ¿Qué piensas de la idea de que los dominicanos rechazan la negritud?

Wilfred: Yo digo, para las personas que saben la verdad, la cultura dominicana, no es un problema de ser negro o blanco, porque los dominicanos saben que no son blancos. Yo digo que es un problema de exclusión social.

Jenny: ¿En qué sentido?

Wilfred: Por ejemplo aquí depende de lo que era tu familia. O sea, lo que tú eres. Lo que tú tienes. Así que yo lo pienso, así que yo lo veo. No es por ser haitiano, que tú tienes, que tú eres. De dónde viene tu familia.

Here Wilfred appears to put forth a colorblind argument by shifting the focus away from race and color and instead identifies class and family status as more appropriate determining factors of status and acceptance in Dominican society. He describes the prejudices in the Dominican Republic toward Dominicans and Haitians as social exclusion rather than racism or discrimination. I wanted to clarify his concept of race and discrimination in the Dominican Republic, so I asked him to compare the attitudes towards race in the Dominican Republic and Haiti:

Yo creo que casi es igual. Casi es igual. Porque ahora mismo está hablando de un sitio en Haití que se llama Pétionville, que son gente que, la gente piensa que siempre está a nivel más alto. Y para tener relación con esa gente hay que tener un pariente o un amigo, y es lo mismo para la Republica Dominicana, casi son iguales. No puedo negar que podría ver casos, como racista, pero no estoy diciendo que, que eso afecta Haití.

While most students reported that they experienced less racial discrimination in Haiti than the Dominican Republic, Wilfred offers a slightly different perspective. By considering factors other than race and nationality, namely class and kin networks, Wilfred notes similarities between the

two neighboring nations. He acknowledges that similar trends of discrimination based in class and family connections also affect Haiti. However, to understand Wilfred's point of view on race, it is essential to consider the racial context of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, one that is very different from the U.S. context. The Dominican Republic has an ethno-racial national identity that acts to unify the country, including everyone on a continuum of Indigenous and Spanish mixedness. Thus race is not easily separable from nationality. Wilfred's reflection implies a similar link between nationality and race in Haiti, as differences within both Haiti and the Dominican Republic become about class and family instead of race, implying that there is still a common ethno-racial national identity.

Wilfred pushes this idea of class differences within Haiti further when he describes how he relates to Haitian labor migrants, the majority of whom, he explains "vienen de la masa, más pobre." I asked if he regarded Haitian labor migrants and Haitian students with a different attitude, he answered:

Wilfred: Sí claro, como no, porque son compatriotas. Nuestra familia. Y sabemos que unos son un poquito frustrado. Cuando se habla de este asunto, los haitianos que vienen para trabajar y los que son estudiantes, pero siempre hay una conclusión que somos haitianos. El problema que tiene uno que trabaja en la construcción afecta a la clase intelectual, afecta a los profesionales más altos que son haitianos. Y siempre hemos tratado a convencer a ellos, trabajar con ellos, que nosotros no lo somos diferentes.

Jenny: ¿Sientes conectados a ellos?

Wilfred: Sí, cerca de mi casa hay algunos que están trabajando en una tienda, y cuando paso a ellos, les saludé. Y hablamos, somos familia.

While Wilfred recognizes that the labor migrants are generally poorer and of a lower class, he feels they are connected through their shared Haitian identity, perhaps strengthened by the idea of a shared ethno-racial identity. The common nationality seems particularly important to Wilfred, as he mentions that they are "compatriotas" and "nuestra familia" various times,

implying a shared membership. He also recognizes that both students and labor migrants suffer from similar discrimination and problems in the Dominican Republic. However, Wilfred implies that the problems of working class Haitians affect the intellectual class. It seems that Wilfred sees the negative image of Haitians coming from the lower classes, which is, in turn, projected on educational migrants and even the “highest level professionals” who are Haitians in the Dominican Republic. While it seems that Wilfred is placing some sort of blame on the lower class migrants, he also seems to have fairly positive associations with them and speaks of them with very inclusive language, such as “compatriotas” and “familia”.

Overall, Wilfred presents a set of ideas that are very different than most students and markedly different from the other students introduced in this chapter. His divergent opinions reflect the great diversity in experience and opinion in even such a specific group as Haitian university students. While there are common themes and perceptions that we will continue to explore throughout this chapter, in many ways Wilfred presents relatively distinct opinions compared to other students.

Jean-Paul

The last two students highlighted in this chapter, Jean-Paul and Frantz, offer a slightly different perspective than their peers and the other students introduced in this chapter. Both Jean-Paul and Frantz have spent time in the United States, currently have family in the U.S., and also opted to conduct their interviews in English rather than Spanish. Jean-Paul and Frantz’s perspectives will offer interesting comparisons among the United States, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. I interviewed Jean-Paul, Frantz, and Jonasen at the Católica on a Saturday morning. After meeting Fredner Gay, a graduate student at the Católica in Diplomacy and International Relations, and an active, older leader in the Haitian community at the university, he

introduced me to the group of Haitians at the Católica. Although there is not currently an official Haitian student organization, there is a patio with chairs and tables where students congregate during their time off.

Jean-Paul studies Business Administration and has been in the Dominican Republic for four years. After graduating he plans on going back to Haiti to help his uncle with his coffee business. He lived in New York for two years and goes back to the United States during most university breaks to see his family. His mother worked hard in the U.S. and got a green card, his sister, having been born in the U.S. is a citizen. Jean-Paul's family is very transnational, as he was born in Haiti while his mother and sister are permanent residents of the U.S. Because of his ability to travel to the U.S., in addition to his experience living in New York, Jean-Paul speaks English quite comfortably and is of a higher class than most Haitian students in the Dominican Republic. While most students scrape by on a month-to-month budget, Jean-Paul can afford to visit the United States at least once a year. Interestingly, Jean-Paul is one of the few students I interviewed who also has a job; he works at a call center, and this is a space where he regularly interacts with Dominicans, perhaps more than his peers.

Jean-Paul included clothing and style of dress in his discussion of racism and discrimination in the United States and the Dominican Republic. I was particularly interested in the way that Dominicans and Haitians read each other on the street and how Haitians were identified as being Haitian, apart from being identified through language by speaking Kreyòl or Spanish with a Haitian accent. What subtle cultural and visual markers indicate that someone is of one nationality or the other? Jean-Paul shed some light on this, but like Wilfred, he related it more to class than race or color. I begin the interview by asking him how he felt living in the Dominican Republic compared to the United States:

In the United States I feel better, I mean every country has racism. But in the United States people respect people, [but in the Dominican Republic] because you are from a poor country, they look at you in a bad way.... I mean, I've never been treated bad, but I've seen other Haitians, like workers, the way they dress, I mean they, people discriminate against them. I don't like that. There are a lot of Haitians being discriminated by Dominican people, because of the way they dress or if they're poor.

Jean-Paul first establishes that he felt more comfortable in the United States than the Dominican Republic on the basis of the type of racism he experienced in both places. He also relates the way that people discriminate in the Dominican Republic to the way people dress, which is a strong visual marker of race and class. Jean-Paul points to the cultural-visual marker of clothing as one of the main identifiers for being Haitian. When I asked Jean-Paul what you could tell about a person based on his or her clothing, he clarified:

For example, like there's someone, by the way someone dresses you can say that person doesn't have good money, he's poor. But Dominicans to Haitians, they know there's only two classes, rich people and poor people. When they see you come to school, or when you go to school there are some Haitians that work in construction, so when they see Haitians like that who don't dress good, who don't have money, they're very, very, very bad.

Here Jean-Paul outlines his perception of how Dominicans view Haitians, in a binary of two classes, rich and poor. For Jean-Paul, clothing is a marker of class that is intensified by being linked with also being identified as Haitian. It reflects poorly upon Haitians when lower class construction workers dress poorly, because it clearly identifies them as both Haitian and poor. This is an example of how nationality and class are often conflated – a Haitian national identity in the Dominican Republic is closely tied to a lower class identity.

Jean-Paul is particularly aware of the impression that clothing seems to give Dominicans and he always tries to dress nicely, which is possible because of his higher-class status than Haitian labor migrants and most of his peers.

I always, for me I always dress good. So when I come to class, they say, yo, you're a rich Haitian right? I say no, I'm not rich, I mean my parents have money but not that much

money. Yes, middle class. So why you dress like that and others dress like that. And I was like I dunno, they dress for the money that they have, if they don't have good money they can't spend on anything that's expensive.

Jean-Paul then went on to give an example of discrimination he witnessed, describing how Dominicans frequently choose him for group projects before other Haitian peers who do not wear expensive looking clothing. Jean-Paul seems to experience more acceptance and less discrimination than his peers based on the way he dresses, which indicates his higher-class status. He also describes how Dominicans place him into the upper class based on his clothing styles and how he feels uncomfortable with this, claiming middle class rather than being rich. Jean-Paul's experience indicates that just as Haitian students who generally have more economic resources experience less discrimination than Haitian labor migrants, Jean-Paul, as a wealthier student, experiences less discrimination than his relatively poorer peers. In this case, clothing serves as the cultural marker to indicate class status.

However, Jean-Paul is certainly not blind to antihaitianismo in the Dominican Republic, but he has seen Dominicans change their opinions of Haitians:

What I can say is, Dominican people, like the teacher say, 94% Dominican people are like anti-Haitian, because you know like the story, a long time ago. That's all they teach them. There's a Dominican girl she used to be my girlfriend. When I met her she told me yo, I heard that in Haiti like it never rains, there's no trees, there's no electricity, people live like a jungle. And I was like, no, no, don't say that. And I showed her some pictures of my house and once we went to Haiti together, and what she saw in Haiti made a big difference. You know sometimes, there's some Dominicans they think like that because they teach them at school, but when they get to learn Haitians, when they get to know Haitians like friends, it's different.

Jean-Paul expresses his opinion that while almost all Dominicans are taught to be anti-Haitian, when they meet Haitians and learn more things first hand, there is an opportunity for them to change their minds. It is important to note that Jean-Paul views antihaitianismo as a learned attitude, rather than an attribute inherent to all Dominicans. Jean-Paul reacted to his girlfriend's

false image of Haiti by showing her pictures and attempting to change her mind about what Haiti was like. He also mentioned making friends with coworkers at the call center.

Jean-Paul also seems to reserve discrimination for a certain sector of Dominican society, claiming that “discrimination is only for people without an education. Like when you’re educated, there are things you would never do.” He associates lack of education with being discriminatory towards Haitians; for example, his girlfriend didn’t know about Haiti until he taught her about Haiti, and then she changed her mind. But, Jean-Paul tells a story about anti-Haitian remarks from one of his professors, leading us to question his conclusion that only the uneducated are discriminatory in the Dominican Republic. Jean-Paul explained that he used to arrive late to one of his university classes because of his job, so the teacher would often make remarks. Once students were asked to bring laptops to class to work on a project:

I have a MacBook, and when I came he said wow, you know that laptop is very expensive. I said yeah, he said where you got it from, I said my mom bought it for me. He said Haitians don’t got that kind of money. What you mean? He said no, Haitians come here because they’re trying to survive. I said no, you cannot say that you’re a teacher. Like if you have something personal with Haitians you have to be professional. You have to act like that. My mom sent me here, she sends me money to pay rent, 500 dollars, school is almost 400 dollars per month. For food, everything, you know, someone who’s trying to survive cannot spend that kind of money all the time. He didn’t say nothing, but he was thinking, trying to make fun of me. But I understand that some people are not educated.

In this case, it seems that Jean-Paul broke the stereotype of being Haitian with showing his wealth with a MacBook laptop. Jean-Paul is very different from the typical Haitian migrant to the Dominican Republic – he is a student, he has ties to the U.S., and can afford expensive items such as a MacBook. This seemed to cause some discomfort for the teacher, who relayed his assumption that all Haitians came to the Dominican Republic just to get by and “survive.” Both Dominicans and Haitian students seem to struggle with articulating the differences between

Haitian labor migrants and Haitian educational migrants; however, Jean-Paul finds that clothing is a primary cultural-visual marker that distinguishes the two groups.

Frantz

Frantz has studied at the Católica since 2009. He has always enjoyed public speaking and learning about different languages and cultures, which lead him to major in Diplomacy and International Relations. He lived in the States from 1999 to 2004 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and still has extended family and friends in the U.S. He preferred to speak English for the interview, since he felt more comfortable with English than Spanish. Frantz has lighter skin than most of his peers at the Católica, and he mentioned that many times he was assumed to be Dominican until he spoke Kreyòl or self-identified as Haitian.

Like many other Diplomacy and International Studies students, Frantz based his understanding of antihaitianismo in his historical knowledge of the island. Frantz told me that “history makes Haitians live a lot of things in the Dominican Republic,” mentioning the Haitian occupation of Spanish territory and the historical negative stereotype assigned to Haitians in the Dominican Republic. However, he advocates for restoring a different image of Haiti, explaining that “we have to eliminate those old beliefs, we need to make a difference as the first Black independent country in the world.”

In Frantz’s experience, he sees more racism in the Dominican Republic than in the U.S. While he acknowledged that there is discrimination in the U.S. as well, Frantz explained that “I’ve been traveling in other countries, but I haven’t seen that type of racism [that exists in the Dominican Republic], really, really high. A lot of people might be hiding it, but we know the truth, we know how we feel, we decide to ignore it because we have to study.” Frantz makes a distinction between the type of racism he has seen or experienced in other countries and the more

intense anti-Haitian discrimination in the Dominican Republic. It is also interesting to note that he mentions that even though some Dominicans appear to be hiding their racism, he and other Haitians still feel unwelcomed. His reaction is to ignore the racism because he has to study, or as he later worded the same idea, “we ignore it because we have an objective.” The fact that Frantz and students have a clear goal in mind during their time in the Dominican Republic – to finish university and receive an undergraduate degree – seems to help Frantz manage the racism he sees and experiences. This goal may also act as a reminder that students are only in the Dominican Republic for a limited period of time or remind them of their status as educated students.

Frantz acknowledges that education has become a privilege only available to those who can afford it, especially for Haitians. He explained that “it’s because of the situation [in Haiti], it’s because of the work, school become like a something high class. Because to go to school here, we pay a lot of money,” also recognizing that it is not cheap to finance university studies in the Dominican Republic. Not only is a Dominican education a privilege to the middle and upper classes, but Frantz sees lack of education as a reason for migrating to the Dominican Republic. When talking about Haitian labor migrants, Frantz expressed that “when they come here, those people who come here for construction, it’s because they didn’t go to school, they didn’t have education.” Frantz identifies clear class and education level differences between labor and educational migrants, also pointing out that labor migrants come to the Dominican Republic due to lack of opportunities and lack of education. He continues describing lower class Haitian migrants:

Construction workers come here because they don’t have economic resources, they are not educated, they are coming for work, they come from the countryside...they be talking the way they want to talk, they don’t understand the difference... they are the ones, to be

honest, that make Dominican people or strangers over here think that all Haitians are the same.

Frantz first characterizes the migration of construction workers as almost a necessity rather than a choice because of their minimal financial resources. He also attributes the negative stereotype of Haitians in the Dominican Republic to the labor migrants because not only did they come from the countryside, but they also appear to not care or not be careful of how they present themselves. This feeling from Frantz is similar to the one of Jean-Paul; however, Jean-Paul used the example of clothing as a cultural marker of class and race. It is interesting that here Frantz does not imply that labor migrants are also victims of antihaitianismo, rather they are part of the problem. However, his further explanation of this point reveals how he views construction workers and other lower class Haitian migrants.

There are a really, really big difference between those people, and the people that come to study. They don't have confidence in themselves, because of the level of racism, they don't believe in themselves, they don't trust, they don't know where they're going. During four years, five years, they let people think that they are the low class in society, they're nobody, that doesn't make them improve. But when you believe in yourself, when you have been through things in a different way, you're trying to let people know that you are somebody else and they gotta respect you as somebody, as a human being, as all human beings on earth.

Frantz not only points out that Haitian labor migrants face discrimination in Dominican society, but also mentions the fact that they are victims of racism in a more psychological way in the Dominican Republic. He attributes their lack of confidence to the discrimination and experience of being marginalized and constantly put down as the lowest ranking sector of Dominican society. This parallels Kia Lilly Caldwell's argument about Black women in Brazil, who negotiate their identities within a society that discriminates against Black identities. Many women she interviewed explained how they had internalized the dominant national discourse and did not want to identify as "mulher negra," or a Black woman. For some women, exposure to

foreigners or activist groups helped them proudly claim a Black identity.⁸ Likewise, in other passages, Frantz talked at length about how being in the U.S. and having experience somewhere else as a foreigner gave him a new perspective and strength to survive the tough situation in the Dominican Republic. The fact that he points out the negative psychological effects of being in the Dominican Republic as a Haitian implies that he has seen or experienced the feeling of being put down and thinking less of oneself. Frantz's reaction is to counter the negative, damaging stereotypes placed on Haitians with positive words by letting people know that they are all equal. Frantz spoke of Dominicans putting down Haitians and his response:

People try to make them think that they are not on the same level of education or of color or economically, but we are the same. Or even higher. You can be a cat, you can be a dog, but if you think like a lion, you can be a lion.

Frantz drew strength from his experience abroad seeing how the U.S. deals with foreigners and race differently in the Dominican Republic. He views the psychological problems of antihaitianismo as a problem that one can fix by having a more positive, confident attitude. What he ignores is some of the very real barriers concerning visa issues, financial resources, and lack of access to healthcare, justice systems, and education that many Haitians face in the Dominican Republic. This remark that all Haitian migrants are the same also seems to contradict his previous statements about the large differences between educational and labor migrants. This tension within Frantz's own reflections, along with the diverse opinions of other students about poor Haitian migrants suggest the difficulty of articulating differences within the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic because of a common ethno-racial identity.

Throughout this chapter we have seen responses to discrimination and antihaitianismo that provide alternative perspectives on the Dominican national script that constructs its national project in contrast to all that is Haitian. Although the Dominican Republic is frequently

⁸ Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil*, 123.

preoccupied with Haiti and Haitian migration, for Haiti, the Dominican Republic does not play the same role. Rather, the Dominican Republic is rather invisible, as Frantz's opinions exemplify:

In Haiti, they don't teach people to hate Dominicans, I didn't even know, I didn't even believe that we were sharing territories, islands. I saw it on the world map but I didn't even believe it. You don't see people interacting, you don't see those people coming into Haiti. They don't go to Haiti, they're scared of Haiti.

Only when Haitians come to the Dominican Republic do they really learn about their culture and beliefs and they do so with very few previous assumptions about Dominican society. Many other students that I interviewed, namely at O&M, were entirely unaware of the discrimination and antihaitianismo before arriving in the Dominican Republic. Many explained that if they had know, they wouldn't have come and that they tell people about it at home to dissuade them from moving to the Dominican Republic.

Conclusion

Haitian students presented diverse experiences with antihaitianismo and discrimination, but a few common themes emerged throughout their responses. Many students drew on a historical understanding of the island to explain the discrimination and antihaitianismo present in the Dominican Republic today. Additionally, some students, most notably Jonasen, based his national identity on a radical interpretation of Haitian history that emphasized the nation's unique revolutionary history. While students touched on both institutional and individual racism, many students were not willing to share personal stories of discrimination. Rather, they described witnessing or hearing about acts of discrimination that happened to friends. This is most likely an evasive strategy that students used because they did not trust me enough to divulge more personal information. It is logical that students were unwilling to open up to me, as I was a complete stranger to most interviewees and only spent several hours with each group of

students. However, their reluctance to share experiences of discrimination may point to the fact that living in the Dominican Republic as a Haitian immigrant, even as a middle to upper class educational migrant, is a difficult experience that students are sensitive talking about. Furthermore, many students expressed surprise or frustration at the fact that they received discrimination from Dominicans, despite their higher social status.

The way Haitian students relate to other Haitian educational and labor migrants in the Dominican Republic, suggests that Haitians conceptualize their national identity as an ethno-racial category, much like how Dominicans consider of their own nationality. However, while the Haitian ethno-racial identity is historically based in the privileging of Blackness and embracing African influence, the Dominican Republic's ethno-racial national identity is founded in the concept of racial mixedness of Indigenous and Spanish, which becomes evident through the various intermediary color labels used to categorize various phenotypes in the Dominican Republic. Thus, as a U.S. student writing for a U.S. audience, I emphasize the different relationship between race and nation that is present in both nations, both are markedly different from the U.S. idea of race. While in the U.S., national identity is not tied to a particular ethno-racial category, in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, each nationality comes with a concept of race that serves to unify the country.

Since there is a national unity rooted in a shared ethno-racial identity among Haitians, students struggle talking about why they receive different treatment than labor migrants, and ruptures within this unified national group become about class rather than race. Thus class becomes the main marker of difference within Haitians in the Dominican Republic, one that students think should reflect the kind of treatment and respect that they receive from

Dominicans. As many students mentioned, they were surprised upon receiving the same treatment as labor migrants.

However, Dominicans don't make the same distinction – as students point out, their higher social status as students is not recognized by Dominicans, especially outside the university setting. This might be because, just like Haitians, Dominicans think of nationality in terms of a unified ethno-racial identity and do not differentiate between poor labor migrants and middle to upper class educational migrants. Thus, antihaitianismo cuts across class lines within the Haitian migrant population, particularly in contexts outside the university where students are not obviously part of a different class than labor migrants. Nevertheless, many students expect to receive better treatment than Haitian labor migrants.

However, Haitians do not deny their Black identity, rather it appears to serve as a unifying feature among them. Similarly, they do not see the discrimination they face as a result of their Black identity or their color, rather they link discrimination to the negative stereotypes of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, one that is closely linked with the lower working class and being poor. While this could be seen as a colorblind perspective, it is imperative that we recognize the different relationships between race, class, and nation in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti before jumping to this assumption. The presence of an ethno-racial identity so closely tied to national identity implies that when students discuss the discrimination they experience on the basis of their nationality, they are also implicitly talking about race, color, and class, albeit in a more roundabout manner.

CHAPTER 4

Language in the Student Migrant Experience: Resource and Liability

Every Tuesday afternoon during my two-month stay in Santo Domingo I headed to Centro Bonó, the non-profit organization dedicated to Haitian immigrant and Haitian-Dominican rights. I participated in a weekly seminar called “Diplomado de Interculturalidad” that promoted a historical understanding of the current tensions within the island and cultural exchanges between Haitians and Dominicans. I usually arrived a few hours before class started to chat with other students or use the library resources at Centro Bonó. One afternoon, I was sitting in the classroom waiting for lecture to start as other students filed in. I frequently sat next to Roberto, an outgoing, talkative Haitian student, and that day was no exception. While we each filled our small Styrofoam cups with coffee and sugar and settled down, Roberto asked me about my own work and made small talk with the other students, a fairly even mix of Haitians and Dominicans. Shouting across the room to a Dominican woman, Roberto said something along the lines of “pero así es la vaina”, using the very Dominican word, “vaina” that often translates to “thing” or “issue.” The woman responded almost in disbelief, asking him if he was sure that he was not Dominican, because someone who was not Dominican would not use the word “vaina” the way he did. She went on to assure him that he sounded just as Dominican as any other Dominican in the room. In the class, there was a wide range of Spanish abilities, ranging from native speaking Dominicans to Haitian students who struggled to express themselves. Thus, Roberto’s high level of Spanish was particularly remarkable for a Haitian. When I witnessed this interaction between Roberto and the Dominican woman who questioned his Haitian identity, I began to realize how important language was to the experience of Haitian university students.

Roberto's experience with language and command of Spanish is exceptional among Haitian university students for a number of reasons. Roberto is in his late twenties and has lived in the Dominican Republic for the past two and a half years. However, part of the reason he knows Spanish so well is because he also came to the Dominican Republic around 1996 when he was 11 years old. Roberto and his mother stayed in the Dominican Republic for two years in the 90s before moving back to Haiti. The earthquake in 2010 forced him to return to the Dominican Republic with the idea of studying for a few years before going back to Haiti. However, Roberto has become very involved in the Haitian community and his studies, so much so that he admits that he will likely be in the Dominican Republic for much longer than he expected. Roberto does community organizing in various Haitian neighborhoods and bateyes near Santo Domingo. He assists several programs related to water sanitation, community events, Haitian-Dominican relations, and he lectures about life skills and self-confidence to various community groups. Roberto has a strong interest in self-improvement and personal motivation, in addition to taking on entrepreneurial opportunities, such as selling health products and magazines on the side. Roberto has taken several technical classes at vocational schools in Santo Domingo but is not enrolled in a university degree program. Roberto is exceptional for his language abilities, as well as for his assimilation to Dominican culture. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, he was one of the only students who explained that he had adopted Dominican customs, using dance, music, and food as examples.

When I asked Roberto in the interview about his experience with Spanish, it was very different than most students' experiences with languages. First he explained how he had learned Spanish when he was younger and confirmed that many Dominicans frequently mistake him for Dominican. I asked him if this affected his experience as a student, to which he responded:

Digamos que afecta en una manera positiva porque al no estar expuesto con el rechazo ni la burla, nos favorec— me favoreció en un sentido de no aguantar toda esta presión. Pero, he tenido la mala suerte de vivir la escena, donde he tenido otros compañeros que son haitianos que no dominan muy bien el idioma español, víctima de burlas, de rechazos, sí.

Roberto explains that his fluency in Dominican Spanish and his ability to pass as Dominican through language have improved his experience in the Dominican Republic in comparison to his peers. He specifically notes that his advanced language abilities have positively affected his experience, avoiding rejection and mocking from Dominicans on the basis of being Haitian or not having a good grasp of Spanish. He recognizes the value of this cultural resource that he has, additionally expressing that it allows him to avoid “all of this pressure” of living in the Dominican Republic as a Haitian. However, he notes that he has seen friends deal with rejection and mocking who are identified as Haitian as a result of their halting Spanish. When I followed up and subsequently asked Roberto if he experienced less discrimination and fewer difficulties than his Haitian friends because of his fluency in Spanish, he answered affirmatively, “Sí. Sí, eso tiene mucho que ver.”

Roberto’s case complicates the understanding that Dominican antihaitianismo derives its ideological force through perceived differences of color and class between Dominicans and Haitians alone. Roberto’s experience points to another factor. The way that the Dominican woman at Centro Bonó, along with many other Dominicans, mistook Roberto as Dominican based on his command of Spanish suggests that language may trump phenotype, clothing, and other markers of identifying Haitians as the “other.” It also indicates how Spanish is highly valued in the Dominican Republic as a marker of cultural affiliation and status, as well as a central expression of a shared ethno-racial identity. Language is just one entry point into the myriad of cultural markers that define individuals in the Dominican Republic. However, Roberto’s case suggests that language is a key part of national ethno-racial identity in the

Dominican Republic; Dominicans value it such that a good command of Dominican Spanish can override appearance and mark someone as Dominican who would otherwise be read as Haitian. Focusing specifically on language reveals that cultural markers are often in tension with each other depending on context.

While Roberto was able to pass as Dominican, this is not the case for the great majority of students. Most students speak Spanish with an easily recognizable accent that definitively marks them as Haitian, as they speak more slowly, use less colloquialisms, and lack the trilled “r” sound. Thus, language in this context is more of a liability than it is a resource. In “Kreyòl incursions into Dominican Spanish: The perceptions of Haitianized speech among Dominicans,” Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Toribio argue that Spanish perceived to be Haitian-influenced is also perceived to be lower class and is assigned less prestige, while “pure” Dominican Spanish is privileged. Thus, the Kreyòl-inflected Spanish spoken by almost all of my participants can trigger a host of assumptions, mostly negative, that are associated with being Haitian in the Dominican Republic. Meanwhile, Haitian students have a different insight on learning and speaking Spanish in this context where language is racialized and used as a cultural marker for discrimination. How do students describe language learning in the context of antihaitianismo where language clearly marks them as Haitian? For most students, it is a difficult experience that reflects in the ways they describe language learning.

Two students succinctly described their challenging experiences with language, stating that “el español para mi era un caos” and “el idioma es un trabajo.” Similarly, Joseph, the UTESA medicine student from Chapter 3, described that arriving in the Dominican Republic was a “choque cultural” and a difficult adjustment. He went on to say that this was partly due to the difference in language, “porque muchas culturas, el idioma es totalmente lo contrario, no utilizar

ese término, es diferente de lo de nosotros, no parecía. Entonces al llegar aquí, eso es una barrera fuerte.” Even though Joseph reported that he had not experienced much discrimination, it is evident that his experience has been difficult and that he has had to struggle to overcome the “barrier” of language. Another student also used the word “barrera” to describe the difficult experience of language learning. This O&M Engineering student, Ralph, has been in the Dominican Republic since 2005, when he had to leave the country after the fall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Ralph used the word “barrera” three times in one response in explaining the challenges of attending university in a second language. He explained for that students who “no tienen tanto dominio del idioma, esa barrera siempre surge.” However, he seemed to be getting at a concept more complex than just a language barrier when he went on to explain how Haitian and Dominican students are different: “físicamente no hay, pero mentalmente, siempre hay que tener esta barrera que el ancestro ha creado y la barrera mental siempre existe todavía.” The way that Ralph verbalizes his experience with learning language seems to reflect the experiences of many Haitian students in the Dominican Republic – the feeling of separation or even rejection from the greater Dominican society. If we consider language as a key part of Dominican ethno-racial identity, Ralph is picking up on a difference in culture that is perceived to separate the two groups. The fact that Ralph mentions a barrier that “el ancestro ha creado” implies that language or perhaps culture, is something perceived to be inherited or an essential part of identity. Language emerges to be a key part of ethno-racial identity in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, however, it is also a source of stress and negative experiences for Haitian students.

The way that students talk about learning and speaking Spanish reflects the difficulty of integration into Dominican society. Another student from UASD, Michel, once made an interesting remark about language, after he explained how a foreign language made university

work more challenging, he described how language created a distinct separation between Dominicans and Haitians.

Hay muchas diferencias, somos extranjeros. No hablamos bien la lengua, como los dominicanos. Y los dominicanos tienen más facilidades para entender una clase que nosotros. Y aquí podemos decir que es como un apartheid. Los dominicanos están en una parte, y los haitianos en una parte. Como en el espacio aquí, nosotros sentamos sólo con los haitianos.

Michel describes the separation between Haitians and Dominicans as an “apartheid,” employing a strong and negatively charged word to describe this relationship. In this quote, language appears as a dividing force between Haitians and Dominicans. However, this strong language indicates that there is more at play than simply just a communication barrier. The negative ways used to describe learning Spanish reflects their overall experience as migrants who are stigmatized and unwelcomed in the Dominican Republic. Additionally, the way that language seems to reinforce cultural divisions between Haitians and Dominicans suggests that language as key part of each nation’s ethno-racial identity. In a study of foreign students in Australia whose second language was English, Erlenawati Sawir also discussed communication barriers at length. Similarly to the Haitian students I interviewed, most of the students in their study “saw the barriers as a compound of language proficiency and cultural difference.”¹ Furthermore, “a strong finding of the study was that gaps in English-language proficiency contributed to a tendency for same-culture students to congregate together, especially outside class, which exacerbated separation between international students and local students.”² This finding accurately describes Michel’s experience, as he explains that there is an ethno-linguistic “apartheid,” partly because Haitian students are not comfortable with speaking Spanish.

¹ Erlenawati Sawir et al., “International Student Security and English Language Proficiency,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 16.5 (2012): 446.

² Ibid.

All the students who described negative experiences with language learning in the Dominican Republic all had accents and Spanish proficiency levels that easily identified them as Haitian. While there was a wide range in proficiency levels of the students I interviewed, even students who spoke comfortably and rapidly had Haitian accents and were clearly not native Dominican speakers. The following chart illustrates the proficiency levels of the students I interviewed. I evaluated students' proficiency levels after listening to each interview with qualitative descriptions. The majority of students I interviewed seemed to be able to express themselves easily, however, almost all of them had easily identifiable Haitian accents and many still made small grammatical errors.

Table 4.1. Spanish proficiency levels of Haitian university students

Proficiency level	Number of students
Speaks slowly with heavy accent, makes mistakes	4
Speaks with accent, makes some mistakes	8
Speaks comfortably and fluidly, but makes some mistakes and has accent	5
Speaks very comfortably and fluidly, light Haitian accent	7
Speaks comfortably and rapidly, could be mistaken for a Dominican	2

There was variation in the ways that students learned Spanish as the next table demonstrates. However, the majority of students take Spanish classes at the local university that specializes in languages, the Universidad Pro Acción y Cultura (APEC) before enrolling in a university degree program. Since most students arrive with little to no knowledge of Spanish, they typically spend three to six months learning and practicing Spanish at APEC before moving onto university studies. Although APEC was the most popular option, the Instituto Cultural Dominicano-Americano and Centro Bonó also offer language classes. Other students described using music, television, and practicing with friends as resources to learn Spanish, while a few relied on Spanish they learned in Haiti.

Table 4.2. Methods of learning Spanish

Method	Number of students
Classes at Universidad Pro Acción y Cultura (APEC)	14
Self-taught, practiced with friends	6
Learned Spanish in Haiti at school	2
Classes at Centro Bonó	1
Classes at Dominico-Americano	1

It is interesting to note that the two students who could pass as Dominican through their high command of Dominican Spanish did not learn Spanish in a classroom setting. Roberto learned as child during a two year stay in the Dominican Republic, and Rozalie, an O&M engineering student learned Spanish outside the classroom setting, as some of her extended family are Dominican. Rozalie explains how she learned Spanish by spending time with Dominicans:

Yo no estudio español, ni aquí, ni allá en Haití. Lo que pasa es que hay una cosa que se llama pegamento primero.... Cuando llegué aquí, yo me pegué con dominicanos. No es que no tenía haitianos... como amigas, primero, tengo primero que aprender un idioma que no es mi idioma, para que pueda vivir aquí, para que pueda asistir aquí, me pegué mucho con los dominicanos.

Rozalie uses an unusual metaphor of “pegar” and “pegamento” to describe how she purposely spent time with Dominicans in order to learn Spanish. She identifies Spanish as being an extremely useful skill to have. She went on to explain the advantages of practicing Spanish with native speakers even without having learned anything in a classroom, “lo que tiene que hacer primero es practicar con alguien para tu acento pueda ser mejor.” Rozalie seems to realize the benefits of having a good accent, and was adamant about her method of learning Spanish, emphasizing that “no he tomado ningún curso, ni me he sentado en una aula escribiendo, haciendo cosas, yo aprendo practicando, escuchando primero, escuchar, practicar.” While she admitted to having a good accent when Katharina, my research partner, remarked that she talked almost like a Dominican, Rozalie also pointed out that she thinks that she has a stronger accent

after spending more time with Haitians. Rozalie has a remarkably high level of Spanish for a Haitian and she seems to have much more contact with Dominicans than most Haitian students. In contrast to the “apartheid” that Michel described, Rozalie seems to have had a relatively easy time interacting with Dominicans and learning Spanish.

Both Rozalie and Roberto learned Spanish by speaking with Dominicans, instead of in classes like most of their peers. In addition to hearing and practicing Dominican Spanish more frequently than their peers, they become more connected and integrated into Dominican culture as Baohua Yu and Huizhong Shen suggest; “greater interaction with the host community would contribute to better competence in the host language”³ in their study of Mainland Chinese international students in Australia. Their findings, as well as the experiences of Haitian university students suggest that cultural integration and language learning are tightly intertwined. Moreover, Sawir found that students who had exposure to the second language as a child,

tend to have higher connectedness, lower cultural stress, more satisfaction with living arrangements, and greater involvement in paid work, when compared with other international students. Those without knowledge from their childhood often restrict themselves socially to same-culture peers.⁴

Sawir’s findings resonate with Roberto’s experience: he learned Spanish as a child, can pass as Dominican, and is involved in his local community with Dominicans and Haitians. In contrast, the majority of students I interviewed were relatively isolated within communities of Haitian students. Language ability and cultural integration seem to be linked, as they each facilitate the other in a cyclical manner.

For most students though, language learning is a difficult process. Both Kreyòl and Kreyòl-accented Spanish can be liabilities for students, as they reveal them as Haitian and thus

³ Baohua Yu and Huizhong Shen, “Predicting roles of linguistic confidence, integrative motivation and second language proficiency on cross-cultural adaptation,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (2012): 73.

⁴ Sawir et al. 439.

expose them to more discrimination. To explore the idea of language as a both liability and a resource, I will contrast Roberto's case with Frantz's experiences, who I introduced at the end of Chapter 3. Language is can be seen as a liability for Frantz, who has lighter skin than most Haitians. I asked Frantz how Dominicans would identify people they saw on the street as Haitian, to which he responded:

By the way the talk, you know the language. And the way they dress, cause we have different cultures. We don't dress the way they dress, and also languages. You know when Haitians be talking, walking down the street, they be speaking and you can hear what they're saying. So, oh, they're Haitian.

Clothing styles seem to be a preliminary indicator of nationality, however, language appears confirm the initial assessment. This discussion of identifying people as Haitian in public led Frantz to describe his own experience with people reading and placing him.

Frantz: For example, some of my friends you go, oh they're Haitian, but sometimes it is difficult for them to tell if I'm Haitian because of my color. So you have to talk to me, and for me to tell you I'm Haitian for you to know I'm Haitian. Because even though I'm speaking Spanish, they can identify that I'm Haitian. Sometimes that's the reason they be talking bad about Haitians in front of me, you know, talking bad about Haitians in front of me because they don't know who I am.

Jenny: When you start speaking to them, do you think they realize you're Haitian then?

Frantz: They realize, that is correct.

Jenny: But they might assume that you're Dominican because of your lighter skin color?

Frantz: That is correct. They might also think that I have like family members that are Dominican as well, but they figure out that I'm Haitian, everything, I always say that I'm proud.

Frantz, who has lighter skin than most of his peers, provides a key example of the role that language plays both as a cultural marker and as part of the students' experiences. Frantz identifies language as the key factor that gives him away as Haitian, despite his lighter skin color that leads many Dominicans to interpret him as a fellow Dominican. In this context, language for

Frantz seems like it should be regarded as a liability, a hindrance to equal treatment, mobility, and privileges in Santo Domingo. However, Frantz clearly states that he never tries to hide the fact that he is Haitian. Many students echoed Frantz by expressing that speaking Kreyòl was enjoyable for them partly because it identified them as Haitian and was an expression of their Haitian culture. The process of learning Spanish is generally a difficult experience and students perceive their lack of proficiency in Spanish as a hindrance to integration into Dominican society. On the other hand, Haitians seem to have no problem with the fact that Kreyòl clearly identifies them as Haitian; the real problem lies in the treatment that they receive as a result from identifying as Haitian. In other words, Haitians often proudly and publicly identify as Haitian, often by speaking Kreyòl, despite the negative impact this has on them.

This may be surprising, especially considering the historical relationship between language and the Haitian Massacre in 1937. As part of an attempt to militarize and secure the border, as well as to Dominicanize the sugar work force in the south and east, Trujillo ordered Dominican troops to kill residents who appeared to be Haitian. Thousands of Haitians and Dominicans were killed across the country, but especially along the border, based on having Haitian appearances and Haitian speech tendencies. Survivors report that Dominican soldiers identified Haitians by asking them to pronounce the word perejil (parsley). Those who were Dominican would be able to correctly produce the word, while Haitians would reveal their accent. Additionally, the devaluation of Kreyòl played an important role in Trujillo's nation-building project and accompanying antihaitianismo.⁵ Kreyòl was presented as a bastardized non-language in contrast to the superior European and Catholic Spanish of the Dominican Republic. Thus, discrimination against Haitians based on language has deep historical roots. Currently,

⁵ Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 46.

Spanish perceived to be Kreyòl-influenced is devalued in the Dominican Republic, according to Bullock and Toribio's recent study.

Kreyòl and Kreyòl-accented Spanish have long been fairly reliable markers of Haitian identity, which, in the Dominican Republic, comes along with a host of other negative connotations. While I did hear of instances when students avoided Haitian identification through language, overall, students spoke very positively about their experiences speaking Kreyòl in the Dominican Republic. Jonasen, who in Chapter 3 expressed how he noted that some Haitian students did not want to publicly self-identify as Haitian, explained that the primary way that Haitians do this is through language or clothing. Speaking about “los estudiantes que no quieren identificarse como haitianos,” Jonasen explained, “cuando hay dominicanos no habla, a veces cuando tú lo encuentras no quiere hablar kreyòl contigo, si lo hablo en kreyòl o en francés, responde en español.” Some students downplay their Haitian identity through strategic use of language, or as Jonasen put it, “es a través del idioma que hacen un rechazo, vestirse, o sea cambiar su forma.” In contrast, Jonasen and the other students at the Católica seemed proud of their Haitian identity, so I asked him if the Haitian identification was strong within his group of friends, to which he responded, “Sí, [la identificación haitiana] es muy fuerte entre nosotros. Porque no discutimos – hasta en francés no discutimos. Discutimos en kreyòl. Todo. Todo, debates, todo en kreyòl. Todo.” Jonasen drives home the point that it is Kreyòl, not French that most represents Haitian national identity.

Most students identify Kreyòl as an important marker of Haitian pride and a resource that creates unity among Haitian students, it is also a resource that is incomprehensible and inaccessible to Dominicans. The language they used to describe speaking Kreyòl in the Dominican Republic with Haitian peers was overwhelmingly positive, especially when

compared to the language used to describe learning and speaking Spanish. Eugene explained that the language he spoke at the university depended on who he was talking to, “con estos compatriotas haitianos hablamos kreyòl, con los dominicanos hablamos español.” Wilfred stated that he spoke Kreyòl with his “compañeros” and expressed that “nos encanta [hablar en kreyòl].” Students used inclusive language, such as “compañeros” or “compatriotas” and frequently used the first person plural to denote a feeling of community, which seems to reflect the unifying effect that Kreyòl has within the Haitian student community. Ralph, who described his experience with Spanish as a “barrera” from Dominican society, described that Haitian students at O&M were “una comunidad muy, muy unida” and that within this community “todos hablamos un mismo idioma.” The positive, inclusive language that students use to describe Kreyòl suggests that it makes them feel connected to a community and is a key expression of Haitian ethno-racial identity.

Language is a double-edged sword for Haitian students in the Dominican Republic, and only one face of racialization, antihaitianismo, and the cultural placement that Haitians experience in the Dominican Republic. It can be a liability for students, as language learning in the context of antihaitianismo is difficult and clearly marks them as foreigners. Speaking Kreyòl or Spanish with a Haitian accent reveals students who might be otherwise assumed to be Dominican on the street. However, language can also be a powerful resource. For the few who have achieved a high level of fluency, language allows them to pass as Dominican in certain situations and avoid the discrimination and treatment that their peers face. Learning and improving Spanish skills can also offer students increased mobility, independence, and self-confidence in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, Kreyòl is a source of Haitian pride and unity among Haitian students who have very positive associations with speaking their native

language. In terms of gaining insights to the nuances of antihaitianismo, the role of language reveals that it is a multi-faceted ideology based on skin color, class, nationality, language, clothing styles, and history. Language is just one look into antihaitianismo, one that works on a variety of cultural markers that are in play and in tension with each other. This tension between competing cultural markers suggests the great complexity of national ethno-racial identity of the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

CONCLUSION

Transnational Student Perspectives and National Identity

One afternoon sitting in on a meeting of Haitian students at Centro Bonó, I noticed foreign students' particularly unique perspectives on salient issues in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Haitian students have been long-term residents of both countries, in addition, they have a high level of education and can express complex concepts related to their personal experiences in the Dominican Republic.

One day I arrived early to Centro Bonó to hang out with fellow classmates and I ran into Andre, a fellow classmate in the Diplomado de Interculturalidad, the seminar I attended at Centro Bonó. Andre invited me to a meeting that he had organized with a few friends and other classmates. I accepted his offer and I joined a meeting of eight Haitians, half of whom were also enrolled in the Diplomado de Interculturalidad. Andre, along with Roberto, had called together a meeting to talk about issues specifically related to Haiti and how the world perceives Haiti. While related discussions happened frequently in class, they wanted a space specifically for Haitians to talk about issues in Haiti related to poverty, development, and Haiti's national image, as well as issues faced by Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Students talked about a wide range of topics. Their primary concern was how to transform Haiti's international image. Because of their experiences in the Dominican Republic with antihaitianismo, they have gained insight into how people outside of Haiti see their country. They discussed in depth how they could improve Haiti's image and the importance of incorporating history in Haiti's national image. The members at the meeting drew pride from the Haitian revolution and the fact that Haiti was the first Black republic. But they also pointed out that their image is no longer one of independence and revolution, rather one of extreme poverty. However, they asserted pride in the

fact that Haiti was loyal to its African-rooted history, while they claimed that the Dominican Republic had “modified” its history to hide its Black heritage.

After talking about Haiti’s image, they established that Haiti needed to transform its image by making major internal changes. They were critical of Haiti, mentioning corrupt politics, disorganization, and widespread poverty, but also refused to blame the situation on their own culture or any specific individuals. They used various metaphors to describe Haiti’s situation, including a sick person with symptoms that needed treatment, a broken car, and a house under construction. One student asked, “who fixes the house when it needs repairs?” To which he provided the answer, “the people who live there.” From this point, the group delved into a long discussion about how any change that was going to come from Haiti needed to come from within. They were adamant about the idea that change in Haiti would come from Haitians, not outside aid or NGOs coming in with their own solutions. They saw themselves playing a key role in this process, as a few students mentioned specifically how they wanted to take their education back to Haiti to contribute towards improving the economic and social problems. Nonetheless, they recognized themselves as outsiders because they had not lived in Haiti for several years. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the majority of students plan on returning to Haiti once they finish their studies, but as Fredner, the Católica graduate student pointed out to me, it is questionable how commonly this actually occurs. Fredner explained that most students, despite having plans to return to Haiti, often remained in another country because elsewhere they earned better salaries and enjoyed a higher standard of living than they would find in Haiti. Students seemed aware of the dangers of “brain-drain” or “fuga de cerebros.” Despite Fredner’s observation that most students don’t return to Haiti even though they plan on it, the students at

the meeting were adamant about returning to friends and family in order to help improve their country.

During this meeting at Centro Bonó, their unique perspective as international students was particularly apparent, but throughout the rest of my interviews, this unique vantage point came through on three topics in particular: Haiti's current political, social, and economic situation, Dominican sentiments towards Haitians, and the different views of race and nation in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In this conclusion, I will highlight Haitian university students' unique perspectives on Haiti, further explore the relationship between nation and race on the island, and raise questions for further research. I conclude by proposing four key considerations to acknowledge when regarding current struggles for Haitian and Haitian-Dominican rights in the Dominican Republic.

Haitian migrant students are in a particularly unique position to evaluate poverty and political unrest in Haiti. The majority of Haitian students are both eager to return to Haiti and to serve their country; they see Haiti's need for educated doctors, diplomats, politicians, and other change makers. Regardless of whether or not they end up returning to Haiti, they view transnational communities playing a pivotal role in helping Haiti face its many challenges. Frantz, the Católica student who also spent time in the U.S., was very conscious of his unique position in regards to making changes in Haiti. He believed that a small group of people would be most effective in creating change in Haiti and that young people were going to make the difference:

The little group of people who believe in the change is gonna make the change happen. Since we're the new generation, we need to believe in ourselves. Since we're in the university, we're talking about politics, we're talking about everything, we see Haiti in another way, we see life in another way. We try to have a round table, try to talk about what we should be doing in the next five, ten years.

Frantz expresses self-awareness that he is uniquely positioned to assess problems in Haiti. He emphasizes both his role as a university student, as he talks about politics frequently with Haitian peers, as well as his international perspective. Like the students who held the meeting at Centro Bonó, Frantz claims that international experience makes university students “see Haiti in another way.” Especially for the few students who have also been to the U.S., they are very aware of the differences in development between Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the U.S.

Frantz’s outlook on Haiti and the way he relates to people from other countries has also changed as a result of living abroad in the Dominican Republic and the U.S. He explains that “I’m not a Haitian citizen, I’m a citizen of the world... it’s not between colors, it’s not between classes, it’s between a human being and a human being,” emphasizing how his concept of citizenship has changed after living in the U.S. and the Dominican Republic. In addition to how he thinks of himself as global or transnational citizen, he also has a more optimistic view of Haiti as a result of spending time in the U.S., and points out that Haitians suffer from being in the Dominican Republic:

Small countries in the Caribbean, all countries are raising, all countries are trying to have a good time economically. Haiti has to believe there can be a change. Haitians in the U.S., Haitians in Europe, they might believe in themselves, they see how people respect people, they don’t live this type of racism that people live over here. Over here, we are discouraged, we don’t believe in ourselves and we have to change that situation right now.

Frantz claims that time in the U.S. or Europe increases Haitians self-confidence, while in contrast, dealing with racism in the Dominican Republic does the opposite. Frantz seems to attribute his optimistic outlook for Haiti to his time spent in the U.S., claiming that transnational experiences affect how Haitians conceptualize their own national identities. For his part, Fredson, who has only spent time in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, also claimed the ability to view Haiti’s problems in a different light. He explained that his image of Haiti had changed

significantly after coming to the Dominican Republic. Fredson said that he was resigned to not having electricity for days at a time, but when he came to the Dominican Republic, he realized that Dominicans perceived this as a problem. Fredson summarized how his image of Haiti changed from his time abroad: “bueno, somos un país pobre, pobre ya, pobre está bien. No pensábamos que teníamos que luchar, que organizarnos, teníamos que ponernos con normas internacionales para que salvarnos. Pero, ahora mismo, tengo otra opinión.” Because of the comparison that the Dominican Republic offers to Haiti, Fredson became aware of certain conditions of poverty in Haiti. This seemed to spark an awareness that Haiti needed major changes to improve the quality of life and to measure up to international standards. Fredson exemplifies how time in the Dominican Republic pushes students toward a critical analysis of Haitian poverty and forces them to consider collective social change as a way to address it.

Students also offer unique insights on the image of Haiti in the Dominican imagination. While students’ responses and experiences with antihaitianismo were explored in Chapter 3, I will revisit and expand a few key points. First, it is clear that the state lacks respect for Haitian students, as Haitian university students feel discriminated against through visa policies and interactions with law enforcement. The president of the UTESA student association explained that he felt that the government should do more to facilitate student migration to the Dominican Republic and that he thought the state was so disrespectful that he would encourage other Haitians not to come to the Dominican Republic. Similarly, the group of students I talked to at O&M concluded that the Dominican Republic offers the positive opportunity of getting an education, but that after that the “doors close” and the possibility of professional development isn’t possible because of social prejudices and the difficulty of getting visa and residence.

Conversely, universities seemed to be spaces with relatively little discrimination, as students reported more positive interactions with Dominicans within the university than outside. Furthermore, occupying the space of the university clearly marked them as students, and thus higher class, than Haitian labor migrants who comprise the majority of Haitians in the country. One student was particularly aware of this and attributed the more welcoming environment of the university to the class differences between students and labor migrants. Students repeatedly pointed to class as a cause for internal differences within the Haitian community and other challenges they face abroad. A UASD student, Michel, explained the problematic dilemma that he saw with the lower levels of discrimination that students experienced in the university setting. Michel described the positive change that he believed Haitian students were encouraging in the Dominican Republic, pointing out that “antes no había convivencia, pero actualmente los estudiantes dominicanos y los estudiantes haitianos estudian juntos ahora, trabajan juntos, salen juntos.” Michel points out that students are at the forefront among Haitians in entering new spaces in the Dominican Republic and at the forefront of creating new kinds of relationships with Dominicans. The university offers a new context where Haitians and Dominicans interact, one where all students are equal peers. But Michel recognizes the role that class plays in these interactions by explaining why students have been able to forge new relationships with Dominicans:

Porque los estudiantes haitianos no son de una clase tan, tan pobre, me entiendes. Es como un mito pero de manera tal porque ellos acercan a nosotros diciendo bueno un haitiano que viene pa’ca en una ciudad, bueno ya no son como los que están en la calle. Pero a mí me duele cuando dicen esto... yo me imagino, bueno, y hablan conmigo porque piensan que yo no soy tan pobre. ¿Me entiendes?

Michel realizes that wealth and class shape how many Dominicans judge and interact with Haitians. Despite the “convivencia” between Haitian and Dominican students, Michel still is hurt

by the fact that Dominicans don't want to interact with lower class Haitian migrants. While he receives different treatment because of his higher-class status, he is troubled by the fact that only reason that Dominican students interact with him is because he is not as poor as labor migrants. Michel, along with many other Haitian university students, struggled with the differences between educational and labor migrants, and the subsequent treatment they received in the Dominican Republic.

The difficulty of talking about differences within the Haitian migrant population is closely linked to ideas of race and nation in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. While different concepts of race and nation in the Dominican Republic have been studied extensively by scholars such as Kimberly Eison Simmons, Ernesto Sagás, and David Howard, similar studies of ethno-racial and national identity have not focused on Haiti. Both scholars and the Haitian students I interviewed recognized that Dominicans modified their history to downplay African influence. While the Dominican Republic privileges its Indigenous and Spanish past and puts forth a national script of *mestizaje*, scholars describe that Haiti has maintained stronger cultural ties to Africa and more openly upholds Black identity as part of their national identity. Scholars have identified, named, and described in detail *antihaitianismo* as the Dominican Republic's dominant state-sponsored ideology, which unifies the country against Haiti and locates Blackness firmly in the neighboring nation. However, in these discussions of race in contemporary Hispaniola, Haiti plays a secondary role, one that serves to explain attitudes and phenomena in the Dominican Republic. In contrast, my thesis presents Haitian students' experiences and reactions to *antihaitianismo* as an alternative perspective on this much-studied ideology, a perspective that lends insight to the lived experience of being othered.

At the end of Chapter 3, I concluded by suggesting that Haitians have a similar concept of nationality as Dominicans, one that is based in a common ethno-racial identity except that while Dominicans base national identity in racial mixedness, Haitians base national identity in Blackness. However, while we have a clear picture of Dominican ethno-racial identity, the nuances of contemporary Haitian ethno-racial identity remain unexplored.

Scholars and researchers tend to assume that ethno-racial national identity in Haiti centers around Blackness. Because of Haiti's unique history of the slave revolution at the turn of the 18th century that gained independence from colonial powers and founded a Black republic, the common presumption is that most people are considered Black, and that everyone is regarded as equal and proud of their Black identity. However, this generalization is comparable to the Dominican national identity of mixedness, which reveals itself to be complex and dynamic under closer scrutiny. My data suggests that race and the national ethno-racial identity in Haiti is far more complicated than just a Black identity. From conversations with students it is evident that class, gender, family ties, religion, and social and geographic mobility also play important roles. These issues emerge as students compare Haiti to the Dominican Republic and the U.S., as students grapple with the differences between their own experiences and those of labor migrants, and as some students choose to strategically hide their Haitian identity. Ruptures and difference within the Haitian community tend to be attributed to class, rather than color, as might occur in the Dominican Republic. These tensions bring up further questions: How are race and color linked to other categories in Haiti? How do Haitians conceptualize race? How do Haitians relate racial or ethno-racial identity to Haitian nationality?

While the goal of my research was not to answer these questions, and my data is not fit to address these larger questions, these questions came up while analyzing my data. These

questions represent the next step in research about national and racial identities on Hispaniola and point to an absence in literature regarding Haitian racial formation and nationality.

In order to address these questions and other contemporary issues regarding Haitians in the Dominican Republic, I present four key considerations to keep in mind. At first glance, or taken in pieces, my thesis may not appear to support the efforts of non-profit groups such as Centro Bonó, who work for the citizenship and rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent. However, I begin to unpack the tension surrounding conversations about Haitians in the Dominican Republic, and present reasons to why these conversations may be difficult to have. The following considerations are critical to keep in mind when having these kinds of discussions. Firstly, it is critical to recognize that Haitians and Haitian university students experience discrimination on a regular and systematic basis in the Dominican Republic. While students may have avoided telling me personal stories of discrimination, they instead told stories from their friends and used different language to speak about the difficulty of living in the Dominican Republic. Secondly, Haitians generally use language of class in order to talk about racism or nation-based discrimination that they witness or experience. Class is used to explain different levels of discrimination that students and lower class Haitians experience. Thirdly, it is imperative to be conscious of how race is conceptualized differently in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the United States. These different concepts of race make conversations about racism difficult and may give the impression that racial discrimination is uncommon. However, this is not the case – as I stated before, Haitians often different language to talk about racial discrimination. Lastly, I argue that it is necessary to recognize the shared understanding of ethno-racial national identity in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. While the specifics of each national ethno-racial identity are quite different, in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, race and nation are

closely linked. The national identity of Haiti remains unexplored by scholars; however, my data begin to reveal the complexities regarding race and nationality in Haiti. As students grapple with antihaitianismo in the Dominican Republic, their own national identity is tested and questioned, an identity that is much more nuanced than just a shared Black identity.

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